No. 1042
30 November –
13 Dec. 2001
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PRIVATE EYE

BROWN/BLAIR

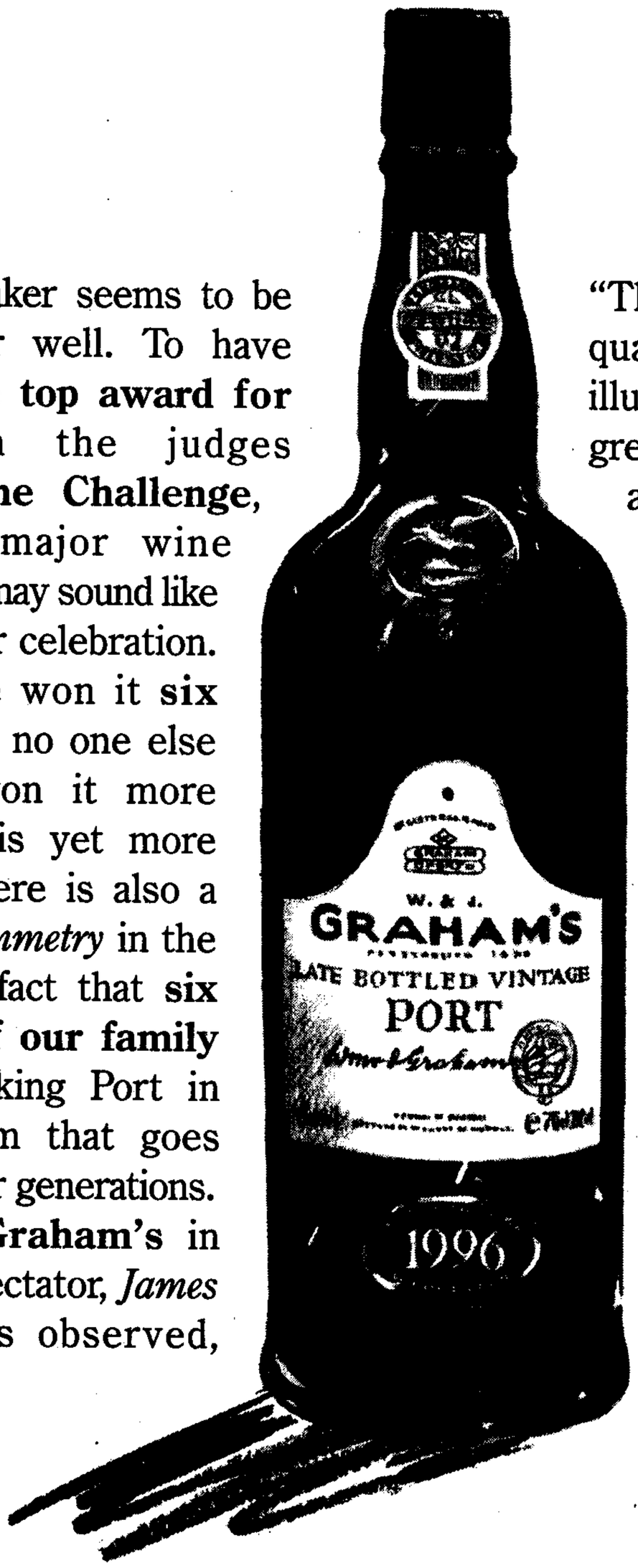
RIFT DENIED

W.& J.

GRAHAM'S

ESTABLISHED 1820

SIX CHEERS FOR GRAHAM'S



Our wine-maker seems to be doing rather well. To have received **the top award for Port** from the judges at **The Wine Challenge**, the UK's major wine competition, may sound like just cause for celebration. But to have won it **six times**, when no one else has ever won it more than **once**, is yet more pleasing. There is also a satisfying *symmetry* in the coincidental fact that **six members of our family** are now making Port in a family firm that goes back over four generations. Writing of **Graham's** in the Wine Spectator, *James Suckling* has observed, "The consistently outstanding quality of its Vintage Ports illustrates a passion for making great Port." And the respected authority *Robert Parker* remarked "**Graham's** has probably been the most consistent producer of great Port in the post World War II era." **Graham's** has repeatedly won more top awards than any of its competitors. Since 1993, **Graham's** has won a record total of **16 coveted Gold Medals** for its Ports in **The Wine Challenge**, including, this year, a gold for the 1995 Quinta dos Malvedos. In the circumstances, we think three cheers seems rather modest. Let's have six.

The Quintessential Port.

www.grahams-port.com

Gnome

King Fahdcash

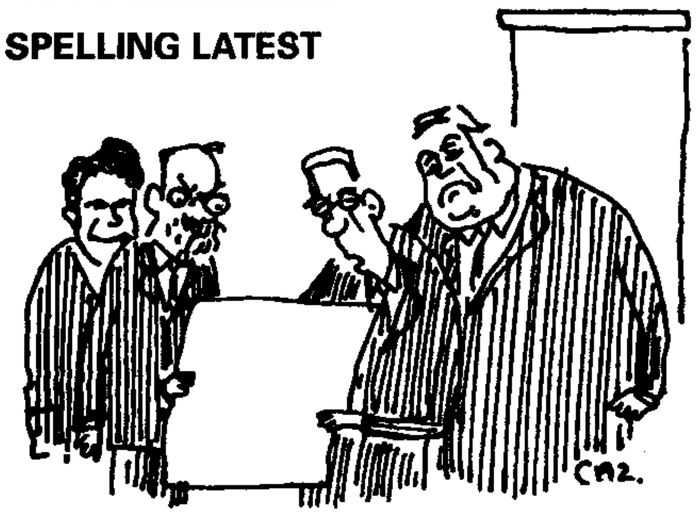
I AM proud to announce that this issue of the Daily Gnome contains a special 24-page supplement "Saudi Arabia Today and Tomorrow".

Compiled by independent observers (from the PR company Huff, Puff and Bogleby), the supplement shows the enormous strides that the desert kingdom has made towards the fourteenth century. Articles include photographic essays on the new democratic institutions (such as the Monarchy), the modern judicial system (including a state-of-the-art laser hand-chopping machine) and the gradual liberalising of Saudi culture which now allows women the choice of staying at home or going out in a burqa and then going home again.

There is a particularly revealing interview with the King himself in which he speaks of his great admiration for Mr Bush and Mr Blair whom he praises for their courage in not mentioning Saudi Arabia's close links with international islamic terrorism. It is a privilege to be associated with this document and an honour to take the King's money.

Lord Gnome

SPELLING LATEST



"Apparently Toony is Good!"

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

£19 per annum. Europe and Eire £27. Airmail (rest of world) £35. Cheques/POs to Private Eye. Access/Visa.

PRIVATE EYE SUBSCRIPTIONS
Mortimer House, 230-236 Lavender Hill, London SW11 1LE.
Tel: 020-7228 0588. Fax: 020-7924 3719.
Email: subscriptions@private-eye.co.uk

EDITORIAL
6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. Tel: 020-7437 4017.
Fax: 020-7437 0705. Email: strobes@private-eye.co.uk.
http://www.private-eye.co.uk

ADVERTISING
Tel: 020-7923 5402

Published by Pressdram Ltd, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. **Printed** by Goodhead Print Group plc, Bicester OX6 7QZ . **Distributed** by P.E. Distribution, Mortimer House, 230/236 Lavender Hill, London SW11 1 LE. 020 7223 9971.

ABC

A taxing read

- *Now Aitken wants to give us money too!* **4**
- *Flakwatch on Fleet St's crystal balls-ups* **5**
- *Mr Norris changes trains... Kalms to the rescue... Wither central office? Tory turmoil* **6**
- *FMD: A law to make the killing legal?* **7**
- *Franzen and Morton: Books special* **24, 25**
- *Is Guinness good for us? Slicker* **28**

"EVIL LUST OF POP BEAST." Thus did the *Sun* announce the downfall of "twisted pop mogul Jonathan King".

Its five pages of coverage included only one very brief reference to the fact that he wrote a column for the paper from 1985 to 1991, and no mention of the handsomely produced greetings card it sent when he was named "Man of the Year" by the British music industry in October 1997: "Congratulations, Jonathan, from all at the *Sun*." (King also received a fulsome letter from Tony Blair, then going through his Cool Britannia phase: "Well done, Jonathan… one of this country's great success stories… I look forward to your continuing determination to ensure that Great Britain means Great Music.")

Like every other paper, the *Sun* claimed that none of King's friends ever suspected a thing. This seems rather surprising. As long ago as 1976, the *Eye*'s Grovel column carried the following dispatch from the Knebworth pop festival: "Why did Jonathan King keep disappearing into his white Rolls Corniche with darkened windows? Through the smokescreen windscreen I could just make out that he had two chauffeurs inside, both male and – in my view – somewhat under the driving age."

And in 1987 it was the *Sun* which broke the news that he had been caught kerb-crawling. As the *Eye* revealed at the time, the source of this scoop was none other than King himself: discovering that the *Mirror* was already on to the story, he decided to let his own paper into his secret.

When *Sun* hacks informed editor Kelvin MacKenzie, he asked them a simple question: boys or girls? On being assured that it was the latter, a relieved MacKenzie said: "Thank Christ for that. I thought I was going to have to sack him."

WHEN Doncaster North MP and former junior whip Kevin Hughes lumbered to his feet in the Commons and hurled his not inconsiderable weight behind David Blunkett's human rights-busting legislation with a sneer against the "muesli-eating, yoghurt-eating, *Guardian*-reading fraternity", he was merely hiding his light under a Garry Bushell.

When the closure of the one remaining coal mine in his constituency was announced in the summer, the hapless miners turned to their MP. Alas, he was nowhere to be found. Further investigation revealed that the big girl's blouse was indulging in his (presumably) secret passion, attending the opera, in Rimini.

WITH true "new" Labour sincerity, Stourbridge MP Debra Shipley sent out a press release describing her encounters with war veterans at two Remembrance Sunday services in her constituency.

"I was very moved by the memorial services in honour of those who fought so hard for our democratic freedom," she was quoted as saying. "I met with veterans of the two world wars and their families and spoke to them."

The only problem with this admirable expression of sentiment is the date of the press release – Thursday 8 November – four days before the Remembrance Sunday ceremonies took place.

THE *Sunday Times* of 11 November carried a story about the coincidences between the convictions of Barry George (for the murder of Jill Dando in 2001) and Ira Thomas (for grievous bodily harm on another man) in 1990.

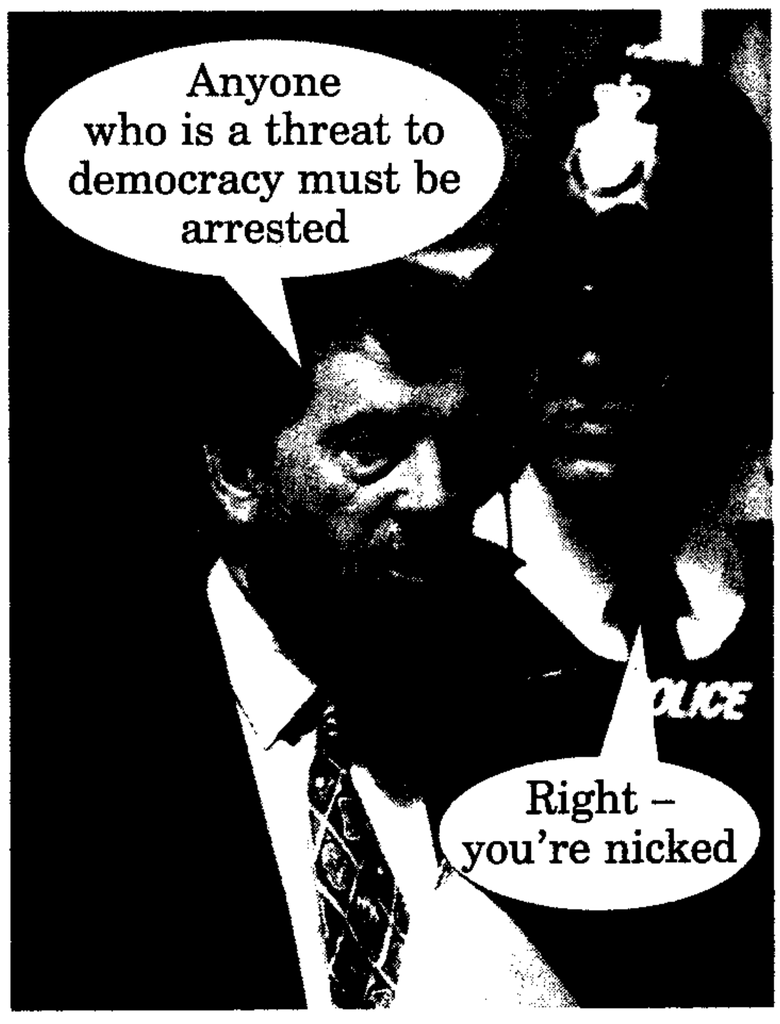
Thomas's conviction was quashed in 1992 after the court of appeal described the evidence against him as "wholly unavailing".

Among the similarities in the evidence against the two men noted in the article were that both defendants were arrested and charged at least 10 months after their crimes were alleged to have happened; that coats belonging to both men were taken from their homes by police and forensically tested; that the tests in both cases exposed microscopic particles of gunpowder; and that the tests were carried out by the same government forensic scientist.

Other matters not mentioned in the article were the name of the forensic scientist, Robin Keeley, and the fact that the police officer in charge of both investigations was detective chief superintendent Brian Moore.

WARNING: reading *Private Eye* could lose you your job. That is precisely what happened to court reporter Simon Brooks who whipped out his copy of the *Eye* during a quiet patch at Cardiff crown court.

When he telephoned the agency which employs him to find out his work schedule for the following week, they informed him that they had to let him go because he had been spotted reading the *Eye*.



★ Our bumper Christmas issue comes out on December 14th – Don't Miss It – Just £1.50 ★

NEWS

FOLLOWING *Private Eye*'s recent libel victory against a dodgy Cornish accountant and his solicitors, comes the even more surprising news that we may retrieve some £14,000 from Jonathan Aitken, the former Tory treasury minister and convicted perjurer of trusty sword of truth fame.

In February 1996, as part of the *Eye*'s round-up of the Scott report on arms sales to Iraq, we published a short item entitled AND ANOTHER LITTLE LIE FROM JONATHAN AITKEN. Compared to the numerous articles in previous issues on various aspects of Mr Aitken's colourful business career, the piece seemed harmless enough. So there was some surprise in the *Eye* offices when we got a letter from Aitken's lawyer, Richard Sykes, demanding an apology for the use of the word "lie". No apology was forthcoming and in March we were served with a libel writ.

The case was overshadowed by Aitken's much more grandiose libel action against the *Guardian* and Granada. Nevertheless, the *Eye* was obliged to defend the action and did so in a strong statement of defence, first drafted in June 1996. Nine separate claims made in public by Aitken, usually on the arms issue, were listed in the defence, all of which concluded with the assertion: "Those statements were false to the plaintiff's knowledge".

In May 1997 Aitken lost his safe Kent Tory seat in one of the biggest swings to Labour in the country. The following month, the trial of Aitken's libel actions against the *Guardian* and Granada started in the high court. Half way through the action, which he was plainly winning, the court heard that the fundamental assertion in Aitken's case was a lie. The case collapsed, Aitken fled to the US and the jubilant plaintiffs called in the police.

In May 1998 the *Eye* lawyers wrote to Mr Sykes asking if Aitken would now withdraw from his libel action against us. Sykes replied that his client "had absolutely no wish to discontinue, because by doing so he would forfeit any chance to restore his reputation in the future".

Any such chance vanished, as Aitken was convicted of perjury and sent to prison. The *Guardian*, Granada and, to a much lesser extent, the *Eye* continued to claim legal costs, in response to which Aitken was declared bankrupt. Now he is applying to be released from bankruptcy and is offering to pay his creditors 47p for every pound he owes.

His main asset comes from the sale of Aitken's glamorous home in Lord North Street, which was sold for £2,400,000. Not all that money will be available to creditors, however, since Aitken proposes that £600,000 should be paid to something called ACT, which stands for Aitken Children's Trust. Generously added to this are "all the proceeds" from Aitken's book about his prison life, *Pride and Perjury*, though he admits that any royalties from the book are "extremely unlikely".

The other main assets are in two large pension funds: one from parliament (£262,318 in the fund), and the other from his highly dubious consultancy Aitken Hume (£313,055 in the fund).

Among those not claiming money from the settlement are Aitken's mother-in-law, owed £800,000; his former wife (£50,000); and his loyal solicitor Richard Sykes (£20,000). Among the creditors are the *Guardian* (owed £1.26m) Granada (£1.18m) and, some way down the list, Pressdram, owner of the *Eye*, which is owed £28,583.

A MAN who keeps playing with himself in public has been told by a judge: "It is in your own hands, but you do need help."

Thanet Times

"They're an old boy band"

Street Of Shame

REBEKAH Wade's *News of the World*, normally so eager to "name and shame perverts", was strangely coy in presenting its list of prominent paedophiles last weekend. "For legal reasons, the *News of the World* cannot yet name the celebrities," it explained.

One was identified only as a "Radio 1 legend" who had been "convicted of sexually abusing a string of boys as young as 13 in Prague". Who he? Any *Screws* readers curious to know more should consult the same day's *People* or *Sunday Express* – or indeed the *Sunday Times*, the *NoW*'s sister paper – all of which carried stories about the "legend" in question, former DJ Chris Denning. Even after learning his identity, they may still ask: Who he?

This could be why the *Screws* is so uncharacteristically reluctant to name names: the talk of "top stars" and "huge celebrities" might be rather less titillating if it turned out that scarcely anyone had heard of them. Another person on the list of "King's debauched cronies" was described thus: "A pop idol, member of world-famous band whose bizarre clothes have been copied by diehard young fans. Figured on thousands of posters on teenagers' bedroom walls." A megastar indeed – and clearly no relation to Derek Longmuir, former drummer in the Bay City Rollers, who was convicted last year of having indecent photos and videos of young boys.

Most laughable of all was the *News of the World*'s reference to a top peer – an Earl, no less – who "served in the House of Lords for more than 20 years" and "was a former pupil at the Scottish public school Gordonstoun", where Prince Charles was educated. It neglected to add that the earl in question, an obscure Lib Dem backbencher, died more than two years ago. There is a perfectly good argument for discretion (which is why the *Eye* has decided not to name him): that the peer was a blameless and decent character against whom there's no evidence. But since there's clearly no danger of a libel writ, nor any possibility that he might face charges, what are the "legal reasons" which supposedly stopped the *Screws* from naming and shaming the poor chap?

DESPITE a circulation falling faster than the trousers of readers of *Asian Babes*, the *Sunday Express* continues to splash out on high-profile talent. The latest expensive signing is a new agony aunt, one Jane O'Gorman.

No doubt *Sunday Express* editor Martin Townsend will be able to avail himself of his new sage's soothing skills whenever berated by his demanding boss, Richard "Dirty" Desmond. Ms O'Gorman is, when not agonising, Mrs Martin Townsend.

BORIS Johnson seemed on the brink of tears when he sacked the *Spectator*'s veteran theatre reviewer Sheridan Morley. "I'm going to have to let you go," he sobbed. "I didn't want to, but Conrad Black insisted."

Shortly afterwards Morley had a call from crazed self-publicist Toby Young. "I'm your successor," Young announced, "but I don't know anything about theatre. Can we have lunch?"

Rather charitably, Morley agreed to meet and give the tyro critic a lengthy briefing on the history of drama. As the meal was ending, Young said he was glad there were no hard feelings: "It's just that Boris and I were at Oxford together, and I told him I needed a job." Whereupon the shameless scallywag departed – leaving Morley to pick up the bill for lunch!

O·B·N

***MIRROR* editor Piers Moron continues to be convinced that the intricacies of his rivalry with *Sun* editor David Yelland are of vital interest to his readers.**

"NEWSFLASH: SUN EDITOR 'TO STEP DOWN'" was the lead news item on page 2 of the *Moron* on 21 November, with 12 paragraphs detailing Yelland "gaffes" like front pages about royal rubber ducks. (By contrast, the *Mirror*'s front page the day before had been devoted to Prince William possibly getting covered in shaving foam).

But while slagging off a soon-to-be-ousted rival is one thing, knocking his boss who might be looking for a replacement is quite another. Page 15 proudly carried the news of "Murdoch Baby Joy" – "Media Boss Rupert Murdoch has become a dad again at the age of 70… he was with his wife Wendi Deng, 33, throughout the delivery at a New York hospital and was said to be 'absolutely delighted'."

JUST FANCY THAT!

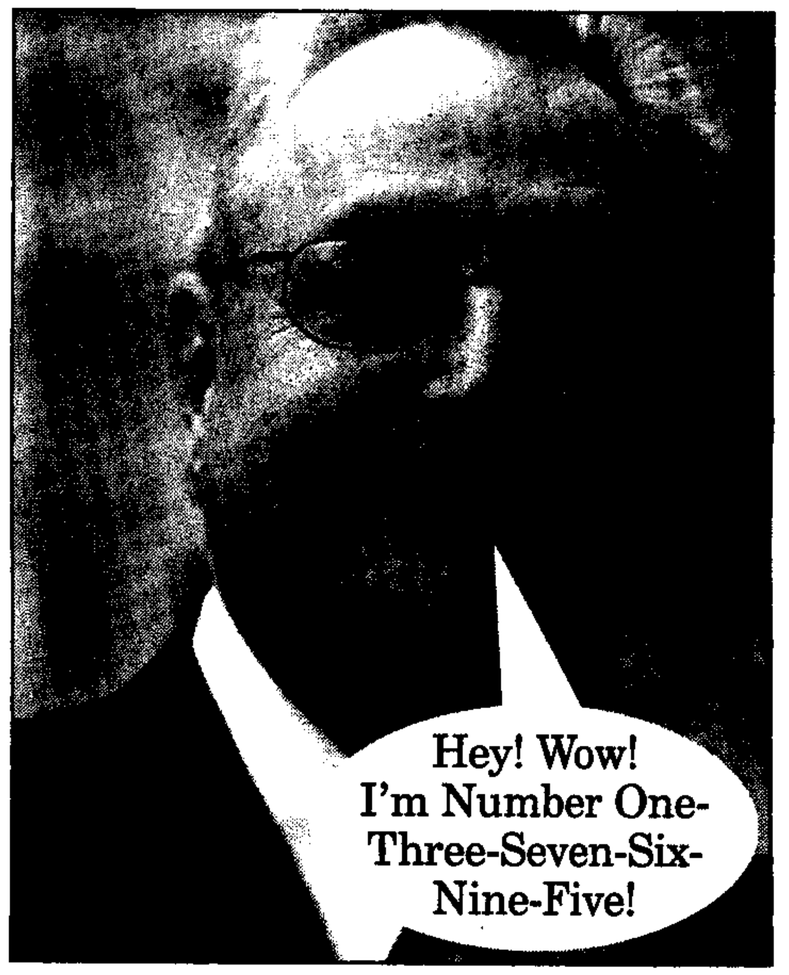
"As Britain continues to support America in bombing Afghanistan back to the dark ages…"

— *Grauniad* Comment, p. 17, 12 November.

"For the first time in years the barbers of Mazar-i-Sharif were busy yesterday. Free from the gaze of soldiers of the Taliban's ministry for the promotion of virtue and prevention of vice, the city began to return to a more liberal life…"

— *Grauniad* news story, p. 1, 12 November.

KING OF THE CHARTS



LUVVIES

"I must discover Gandalf somewhere inside myself. Now still three months away from shooting – for me – my Gandalf doesn't exist, not even in my mind. He will only come to life as the camera turns and discoveries are made in the very moment."

IAN McKELLEN on filming the Lord of the Rings
The Sunday Telegraph

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

"THE proper place for dirty linen is out in the open." So says Melanie Phillips (aka teen sensation Mel P) in the *Sunday Times*, defending the right of the *Mail on Sunday* to reveal the drug problems of Lord Irvine's son, the right of the Scottish press to investigate Jack McConnell's love life and the right of the *Sunday People* to expose a footballer who had an affair with a lap dancer.

"Dishonesty, cruelty or the breaking of promises in sexual relationships are as revealing of character as they are in any other area of life," she thunders. "It is in the public interest that it should know those character details that judges and public figures so lamentably collude to keep secret."

Just so. A couple of years ago, for instance, much light was shed on the "character" of chief schools inspector Chris Woodhead when his former wife revealed that he had had an extra-marital affair with one of his pupils, Amanda Johnston. "Journalists are distastefully and frantically paddling around in the detritus of a long-ago divorce," wrote Melanie Phillips, a friend of Woodhead, as she berated the press for "gloating over a torrid stream of allegations about his private life".

Still, her new enthusiasm for kiss and tell stories ought to stand her in good stead with her next employer: Mel P is about to leave the *Sunday Times* and take up a post as chief moralist at the *Daily Mail*.

THREE years ago the *Daily Mail* launched a campaign demanding government action to control the menace of leylandii trees – "the scourge of suburbia" – and since then readers have often been regaled with stories of the acrimony provoked by these fast-growing hedges.

In September, for instance, the paper gave extensive coverage to a legal dispute in Northumberland, where a man had climbed into his neighbours' garden and chopped down the trees. It quoted with approval the judge's comments in the case: "Once again a leylandii hedge has provided fuel for a dispute between neighbours. It is, in my judgment, a thoroughly unsuitable plant to place on, or next to, a boundary."

Now a another dispute has erupted in Wiltshire, where residents are protesting against a local tycoon who has despoiled the landscape by planting hundreds of leylandii on the edge of his estate. No doubt the *Mail* will be taking up their cause without delay. Or perhaps not. For the offending landowner is none other than young Lord Rothermere, the owner of the *Daily Mail*.

GIANT regional newspaper group Newsquest, now owned by the voracious US company Gannett, has shown just how much it invests in its staff.

As soon as an Investors in People team had finished inspecting Newsquest's Bradford outpost (the *Telegraph and Argus*), the company announced that 17 hacks were to lose their jobs as a cost-cutting exercise even though the paper made a net profit of more than £6m last year.

But it can still boast to be an official Investor in People, so that's all right then.

FLAKWATCH

In Fleet Street

"The bombing [of Afghanistan] is not military but political. It is revenge, no less ferocious for being postponed. It will probably freeze the Taleban in their hold on power as long as it lasts, as is usual with bombed regimes."

— Simon Jenkins, the *Times*, 10 October.

"Several things are becoming very clear about this Enduring Freedom campaign: the Taliban are rather good at fighting and won't give up without one hell of a scrap."

— *Daily Mirror*, 27 October.

"Both Bin Laden and the ranks of the Taliban are proving more resilient than Washington had hoped. Predictions that Taliban morale would collapse almost as soon as the bombing started and that troops would defect en masse appear to have been premature. Around the strategic northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, they have even gone on the counter-attack… So the Taliban are not imploding, and their opponents in the Northern Alliance are not advancing, even though they have effectively got the Americans as their de facto airforce."

— Ben Brown, *Scotland on Sunday*, 28 October.

"Where do we go from here? Nobody seems to know. American bombing gets more intensive, more civilians die. Soon the point will come when the death toll of innocent Afghans equals the number killed in the Twin Towers. Washington will have had an eye for every eye, a tooth for every tooth. Revenge in full, but… the Taliban will still rule the roost in Kabul."

— Paul Routledge, *Daily Mirror*, 2 November.

"The popular expectation of a knockout blow against the Taliban has been cruelly disappointed. Remember the optimistic remarks a couple of weeks back about the way American bombs were eviscerating the enemy? This has given way to sombre comment about the Taliban's dogged resistance. Evidently our leaders gambled on the supposition that the unpopularity of the regime would mean the bombing would bring about the Taliban's rapid collapse…

"This was a series of misjudgements… If the Northern Alliance fails to overthrow the Taliban, we may have to send in our own ground forces. Do we do that next month in face of the grim Afghan winter, Moslem religious holidays and unexploded land mines? Or do we wait for spring?"

— Prof Arthur Schlesinger, *Independent*, 2 November.

"Attack on Afghanistan: Winter is coming and the Taliban are strong as ever. What now for the war on terror?"

— *Guardian*, 3 November.

"An uncomfortable truth was finally being digested. For all the rhetoric about the 'long haul' ahead in Afghanistan, many in both countries had hoped that somehow the Taliban would be prised from control within months – perhaps even by Christmas… Now, however, there is a dawning realisation throughout the American and British military that it really could take at least a year."

— David Wastell, Robert Fox and Sean Rayment, *Sunday Telegraph*, 4 November.

"Despite assurances from Washington that co-operation between America and the alliance is preparing the ground for the defeat of the Taliban, there has been little action yet to seize territory held by the regime in the north. Yesterday the alliance claimed its first significant territorial gain since the airstrikes began, saying its troops had taken Akuproq, a village 20 miles south of the strategic Taliban-held city of Mazar-i-Sharif. Amid jubilation at the alliance's 'foreign ministry', there were confident predictions that Mazar itself could fall within a week. Behind the rhetoric, however… its ragtag collection of troops and bickering commanders seemed ill-prepared for any advance."

— Tom Walker, *Sunday Times*, 4 November.

"One way to conduct a ground campaign without risking excessive casualties is to back somebody else's army. This is what the US is now doing with the Northern Alliance… At the same time, the idea that, with a little support, the Northern Alliance would push through demoralised Taliban ranks has turned out to be optimistic."

— Prof Lawrence Freedman, *Independent*, 6 November.

"American commanders had expected the combination of bombing and commando operations to have broken the Taliban by now. Mass defections had been expected. Instead the Taliban appear more tenacious than ever."

— Robert Fox, London *Evening Standard*, 9 November.

"Key Afghan opposition commanders are on the verge of abandoning the fight against the Taliban because their confidence in US military strategy has collapsed. Insurgents are no longer willing to infiltrate eastern Taliban-controlled Afghanistan because they believe American blunders are destroying the opportunity to spread revolt against the Islamist regime."

— Rory Carroll, *Guardian*, 9 November (the day Mazar-i-Sharif fell).

"Taliban strategy may well be to play the Pashtun card for what it is worth as they abandon the territory of minority groups, aiming to keep Kabul and their other stronghold, Kandahar. The pace of war is always unpredictable. Few expected Mazar-i-Sharif to fall so quickly, yet Kabul could take longer than expected. This will be a far tougher military nut to crack. The defences are better organised and able to exploit the mountainous terrain, leading to a possibility of vicious fighting inside the city."

— Prof Lawrence Freedman, *Independent*, 12 November.

"That's the easy bit, independent defence analysts agreed yesterday, as the Northern Alliance celebrated the capture of Mazar-i-Sharif and the western town of Herat. The task now facing US military planners, the British supporting them, and the international community looking on uneasily, will be far more difficult… Where will the Taliban turn and make a stand? Will they leave Kabul and concentrate on defending their stronghold of Kandahar? Most analysts believe they will hold up in Kabul for if they abandon the capital they will give up their claim to government… If the Northern Alliance does take Kabul on, the battle is likely to be very bloody."

— Richard Norton-Taylor, *Guardian*, 13 November (the day Kabul fell).

"The conflict is a sham… Not a single terrorist implicated in the attacks on America has yet to be caught or killed. Osama bin Laden and his network have almost certainly slipped into the tribal areas of the North-West Frontier of Pakistan."

— John Pilger, *Daily Mirror*, 16 November (one day after an American air-raid near Kabul had killed several senior Al-Qaeda officials including Osama Bin Laden's deputy, Mohammed Atef, the man believed to have masterminded the 11 September attacks).

IN THE TEAROOM

THE Tories' pisspoor performance in the Ipswich by-election has tempted Iain Duncan Smith to dust down Rick Nye's scorched earth proposal for the complete abolition of Conservative Central Office, including the sale of the building and the sacking of most, if not all, of its personnel.

The leader himself has quit the dismal Smith Square bunker for a forward command post in the Commons, described by one visiting civilian as being like "Brigade Headquarters in Lisburn". The office is run by the brisk Ulsterwoman Jenny Ungless, Duncan Smith's new chief of staff.

It is from here that each morning former guards officer Mike Penning is despatched to give the lobby their "marching orders". Alas, this atmosphere of cool, military efficiency does not extend to Smith Square, where a chaotic gaggle of Camillas and Belindas can barely be bothered to answer the phones. The research department, once a hothouse of political wannabes destined for special advisorships or eventual ministerial office, is now packed with radically unemployable dimwits.

Transport spokesperson Theresa May's belated assault on Stephen Byers's bankrupting of Railtrack, for instance, has been entirely based on Nick Clarke's questioning in an edition of Radio 4's *The World at One*. Prior to the broadcast no one at central office had thought the Conservatives should have a line on the affair, or if so, any clue to what it might be.

Meanwhile chief policy wonk Greg Clark, entrusted with a complete rethink of party policy, has, after much headscratching, finally come up with... er... a mission statement for his own review "to develop real solutions to real problems".

Incoming party treasurer Sir Stanley Kalms has already hinted his reluctance to waste any more of his own money propping up this crumbling edifice and the apocalypse option is gaining added impetus from the growing suspicion that party chairman David Davis may not have entirely abandoned his own leadership ambitions.

'Urquhart'

THE chairman of customs and excise, Richard Broadbent, faced an embarrassing showdown with the Commons treasury sub-committee earlier this month over the organisation's failure to inform ministers about the huge amount of duty free goods being stolen from customs' own warehouses.

While the smuggling of alcohol and tobacco has cost the taxpayer an estimated £2bn, Broadbent's priority is to announce the setting up of a new e-Business unit. In a John Birt-style round robin to staff he announces: "The new unit will not own or run projects or systems. Its job is that of business architect – to ensure their design contributes to a coherent whole in a way we have not been able to do in the past and which the opportunities of e-Business now demand that we do."

Broadbent's performance in front of the treasury sub-committee, meanwhile, can have done little to further his chances of taking over from Sir Richard Wilson as cabinet secretary when he retires next year, a post for which he was hotly tipped just a few months ago.

THE appointment of Sir Stanley Kalms as Tory treasurer means the Conservatives have a financial head who invests his cash in... the Labour party!

Kalms, who makes his money from Dixons, the electrical group he founded and chairs, is of course an established donor to the Tories and a financial backer of allied causes, like the campaign against the euro. As Tory leader Iain Duncan Smith put it: "Sir Stanley has been a long-time supporter of the Conservative party and successive Conservative leaders and he understands and shares our values and beliefs."

But Kalms also believes in giving money to Labour. The party's current accounts show Dixons gave it "£5,000 or more" to buy "tickets for dinners". Kalms may be a Tory at heart, but he clearly believes the party in power is a good investment, whatever its politics.

Labour's acceptance of the Dixons cash shows its own undiscriminating approach to donations; and the latest returns from the electoral commission reveal other interesting donors, including New York's new Republican mayor-elect, Michael Bloomberg.

Labour received £17,625 from his City information firm, Bloomberg, from whose premises Tony Blair even launched Labour's "Business Manifesto".

Bloomberg himself threw his money at the New York campaign, spending millions and even switching from the Democrats to the Republicans to win the election. For men of his financial clout, perhaps it doesn't matter which political party he buys into: Democrat, Republican, Labour... they're just different names on receipts, aren't they?

ONE bizarre piece of news slipped out by the transport department in the fog of war was that Steve Norris – former Tory transport minister and road haulage aficionado – is to chair the National Cycling Strategy Board as Labour's new cycling champion.

Norris – who sits on the board of Jarvis, a firm fined more than £500,000 by the health and safety executive over rail safety – is an unlikely hero for Labour. But the party hierarchy does like him, and not just for his transport credentials: he is also a sworn adversary of London mayor Ken Livingstone, who has just sacked Norris from the board of Transport for London.

Labour has already recruited Ceri Evans, who ran Norris's mayoral campaign when he stood against Red Ken, and it is not hard to imagine Norris being an eventual Labour-backed candidate against Livingstone in another mayoral contest. This latest cycling appointment could be part of a long-running charm offensive to win him over.

How cyclists feel about it all is another matter. Apart from his stint at the Road Haulage Association (not known for being cyclist friendly), Norris has seats on the board of a bus company (First Groups' London bus operation), the Motor Cycle Industry Association and Jarvis. Does he even cycle? The department of transport told the *Eye* that he "cycles on those occasions when it is the most suitable means of transport", which could mean never.

Hitherto, of course, the only "riding" Steve has been associated with was of the horizontal variety – when he was known affectionately as "Shagger" Norris, the minister with five mistresses.

THE HUNGRY NEED BREAD NOT BOMBS

From a Quaker poster

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Observer

WHILE the government thinks teachers can be replaced with classroom assistants, it still needs to keep headmasters and mistresses on side. Thus were 600 new heads gathered for a conference at the National College for School Leadership in Nottingham in November.

The department for education (DfE) promoted the conference with three separate press releases, showing how seriously it rates the college – a "Sandhurst for Schools" backed by the prime minister.

The heads heard droning speeches from schools ministers Estelle Morris and Stephen Timms, along with educational bureaucrats including chief executives of the Teacher Training Agency, the General Teaching Council and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

Luckily there were some more exciting speakers, including the dynamic Paul Corrigan. According to the press releases, Corrigan is either a "bestselling author and management consultant" or a "bestselling author and senior management consultant". Strangely none of the press releases mentioned that while Corrigan has no particular educational experience, he is both a special adviser to health secretary Alan Milburn and married to Labour's chief whip, the former local government minister Hilary Armstrong.

Corrigan is also a leading figure in the New Local Government Network, a corporate-funded, pro-privatisation lobby group whose business backers seem to win many contracts in local government and the NHS (see *Eyes passim*). Following the *Eye*'s lead, the *Sunday Telegraph* recently reported on his work as "a lobbyist for dozens of firms which have won lucrative NHS contracts". Is education the next prize?

Corrigan's speech was "a fascinating analysis of Shakespeare's lessons for the leaders of today". A lesson from Shakespeare for the busy Corrigan might include Justice Shallow's advice that "A friend i' th' Court is better than a penny in purse" (*Henry IV, Part 2*). Meanwhile business funders of the New Local Government Network can crow, like Macbeth, that "I have bought/Golden opinions from all sorts of people". Sadly, it cannot be said of Corrigan that "thou shalt know thy interest was not bought/Basely with gold" (*The Rape of Lucrece*).

EDDIE McDERMOTT, London region secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), was in warlike mood at a recent meeting of the London regional committee at the T&G offices in Stoke Newington.

Delegate Bob Tennant proposed a motion condemning the bombing of Afghanistan. But Brother McDermott ruled it out of order on the grounds of "national security". He then informed the brothers and sisters that if he were in charge he'd bomb Iraq as well.

'Backbiter'

"This shaving mirror's not very effective"

DOWN ON THE FARM

THE latest brilliant wheeze from the Department for the Elimination of Farming and Rural Affairs (Defra) is to propose that farmers will only be allowed to continue farming under an official licence from the ministry.

This means that, if a farmer offends the ministry, its officials can put him out of business. Even to get the licence in the first place, the farmer will have to pass a test proving that he is "competent" to run a farm.

Not surprisingly many farmers have suggested that a similar test should be introduced for the ministers and officials proposing the scheme. It is, after all, being put forward by a government department which is now tacitly admitting that it has itself been breaking the criminal law on an unprecedented scale.

Last March, on the advice of Prof Roy Anderson's Imperial College computer, the Maffia introduced its "contiguous cull" under which millions of healthy animals were destroyed just because they were on farms within "three kilometres" of premises infected with foot-and-mouth. As is explained in detail in *Private Eye*'s *Not The Foot And Mouth Report*, the officials had no legal power to order such a scheme. They claimed as their authorisation the animal health act 1981. But this only gives the minister power to destroy animals which are infected or which have been exposed to infection. As lawyers soon pointed out, this in no way justified the blanket slaughter of animals under the cull; and in more than 200 cases where owners legally challenged the cull, the Maffia lawyers backed off.

The last thing they wanted was to see their scheme put to the test of a court case. But the final admission that they were acting illegally is contained in the animal health bill currently being rushed through parliament. The bill's chief purpose is retrospectively to make amends for this mass-criminality, by giving the Defra officials precisely the powers they claimed already to have last March when the cull was launched. It gives the officials the right to enter any premises, to kill any animal they wish, including dogs, cats and other pets, while denying the owner any right to challenge them. Not only will it become a criminal offence for the owner to question what the officials are up to. It will even become an offence not to give the officials any assistance they request in pursuing their duty. So if a farmer does not immediately carry out the officials' orders to the letter, the least he can expect is a reduction of 25 percent in compensation payable for the animals destroyed, at worst an unlimited fine.

A devastating legal opinion by Stephen Smith QC arguing that this bill is in serious breach of the human rights act can be read in full on the excellent FMD website www.warmwell.com.

In terms of concealing the full horror of what the government is up to, it may also be revealing that the animal health act 1981 is no longer available from the Stationery Office. When Struan Stevenson MEP, the Tories' agriculture spokesman in the European parliament, was desperate to get hold of a copy, he had to apply to the authors of *Private Eye*'s *Not The Foot And Mouth Report*. A copy of the act was of course emailed to him at once. The *Eye* is happy to help those who are actually meant to be clued-up about these matters.

'Muckspreader'

ANN CLWYD MP

IN our issue dated 12 November 1999, an article headed "Charity News" made certain comments about Ann Clwyd MP's chairmanship of INDICT that may have implied that she had appropriated money provided to INDICT for her own purposes.

We did not intend any such suggestion and apologise for any misunderstanding that may have been caused by the comments.

ROSE-TINTED GLASSES

WHILE others were celebrating the Taliban's flight from Kabul, General Sir Michael Rose sounded a cautionary note.

"If the international community does not now prove willing to put a large UN peacekeeping force into Afghanistan within a matter of days," he wrote in the *Daily Mail*, "then that country may well be facing a further prolonged period of atrocity, instability and low-level civil war. Every day that passes without international peacekeepers on the ground makes it likely that we will witness horrors even more appalling than those reported in the past few days... To command such a varied force will not be easy, but as I discovered in Bosnia, where I commanded troops from 16 nations, it is perfectly possible."

Mail readers might infer from this that Rose had successfully prevented atrocity and instability while commanding the UN peacekeepers in Bosnia. The only thing that hampered him slightly, he revealed, was the lack of a sufficiently "tough mandate".

A likely story. Under UN security council resolution 836, for instance, Rose had a mandate to "deter attacks against the safe areas". But when Serb artillery launched a fierce bombardment against the safe area of Gorazde in April 1994, he did nothing. It was, he insisted, merely a "minor" and "tactical" operation by the Bosnian Serbs, who had "no serious intention" – even though he was receiving daily reports from UN military colleagues in Gorazde warning that the death toll was rising fast.

Still, why should Rose worry about the detail, so long as media organisations are happy to pay handsomely for his "expert analysis".

NEWS of the *Eye's* great legal victory over the West Country accountant John Stuart Condliffe who withdrew his libel action against the magazine after almost ten years of litigation (see *Eye 1041*) has not reached all of those people who might be most interested in the case – the residents of South East Cornwall where Condliffe lives and still practises as an accountant.

Local newspaper the *Cornish Times* has failed to inform its readers about the details of the court case or its outcome. In reply to one reader who inquired about this lack of information, managing editor John Noble wrote: "Unfortunately local newspapers do not have sufficient staff to have the luxury of a reporter spending many days in the high court reporting on one case."

Instead the week after the libel trial ended the *Cornish Times* devoted its front page to a story about whether a woman could be a department store Father Christmas.

DAVID Yelland's war against Piers "Morgan" Moron may not be his biggest embarrassment. Sacked *Sun* TV critic Garry Bushell is pressing ahead with his unfair dismissal case against News International.

NI claims Bushell was guilty of gross misconduct for signing a contract with publisher John Blake that made it possible for Flakey Blakey to serialise Garry's novel in the *Daily Star* – though only after Yelland broke his word and refused to promote it in the *Sun*. But for once Bushell seems to have right on his side: hacks who write books have no legal obligation to sell the serial rights to their own paper, as was proved most recently when the *Times* bought extracts from Boris Johnson's election diary.

When the case is heard at an East London employment tribunal next spring, David Yelland will have to face a public cross-examination by Bushell's barrister, the fearsome Shirley Boothroyd. Blood-sport enthusiasts are advised to book their seats now.

Warballs

Speaking from a cellphone while having a pedicure, Ms Collins said that, since 11 September, she had been 'having recurrent dreams of going into my closet and discovering clothes and shoes there that I had entirely forgotten about'. It is, Ms Collins (a fashion writer) said, 'an entirely fresh thrill'. It is also, she went on, something that actually occurs.

"In mid-September, on one of 'those insanely surreal blue skies days', Ms Collins explained, she had left the house not wearing one of many Geoffrey Beene outfits that have caused some people to refer to her as the muse of that particular designer, but a cotton striped blouse and a straight narrow linen skirt and low heels, a little ladylike uniform, the kind of clothes she might have pulled from the closet in her dreams.

"The response on the street to Ms Collins is always worth noting, since few people can approach her stylization in both grooming and dress. In this case, however, Ms Collins was startled to find that 'so many people stopped me on the street'. The reason, she concluded, was that 'there is this desire now for some kind of simple feminine uniform' to replace 'the kind of aggressive, chaotic, androgyny' that characterized the spirit of capital fashion with a capital F. 'The last thing anyone wants to see right now is camouflage or any kind of savagery expressed in clothes,' Ms Collins said earnestly. 'Let's face it. You can't play at camouflage now. Either you're fighting for civilization or you're not.'"

— *New York Times*, 20 November.

"Oh no – I've been tracked down by Friendsreunited"

The Curse of Gnome

WHEN Inspector Knacker made a series of arrests in Merseyside legal circles on 16 November, the *Eye*'s old chum Kevin Alphonsus Dooley was among those arrested.

Dooley, a prominent local solicitor, has successfully sued Lord Gnome's organ twice for defamation. How his name came to be mixed up in the police investigation into alleged local corruption is a mystery and we hope the veil of suspicion is soon lifted.

LEGAL SECRETARY required for bust solicitors in Birkenhead,

Daily Post

ITV

Night And Day
Crossroads
Cold Feet
(ITV)

"WE'RE all middle class now," say politicians from time to time, their fingers crossed behind their backs. For if they were telling anything even remotely resembling the truth, how could you explain most TV drama? In class terms our most popular shows occupy traditional battle lines: prestige productions like *The Way We Live Now* are patrician, while pretty much everything else is solidly plebeian.

In *EastEnders* working-class characters are sometimes virtuous, sometimes not, but middle-class characters are invariably horrible. All officials, whether pettifogging or corrupt, speak with orotund RP accents, to indicate their innate villainy. Posh doctors are heartless brutes, while kind doctors were born within the sound of Bow Bells, stone the crows, how's yer father.

Similar stipulations apply to *Coronation Street*, where only northerners are afforded basic human rights. It may all be nostalgia for an arcadian working class past that never existed, but if ratings are a guide, it's what viewers seem to want.

Night And Day is therefore a brave and possibly foolhardy venture. ITV's early evening replacement for *Home And Away* (other titles considered: *Up And Down*, *In And Out*, *Shake It All About*) is set in a glossy and unashamedly well-heeled Greenwich, where the sun is always shining and no one mentions the dome. There are things rarely seen in soaps before. Trees. Expensive cars. Neat, newly decorated houses full of tasteful bric-a-brac. Every member of every family has at least one mobile phone, and all the adults drink gallons of red wine out of big middle-class glasses with long stems.

The local pub is run by Gareth Hunt from *The New Avengers*, although we rarely go in there, probably because it's run by Gareth Hunt from *The New Avengers*. But there are no fruit and veg stalls to be seen, no launderette or corner shop, no old bags with fags hanging out the corners of their mouths. People even occasionally leave the road to go to work or do other things. It's all very strange.

But then, maybe not. *Night And Day* is the second new soap to begin on ITV this year, after the already legendary *Crossroads*. Here was the original nostalgia for a past that never existed, and for an audience that had long since died of old age. Although the sets are

"And how would you like your food Sir, Delia Smithed, Nigella Lawsoned or Jamie Olivered"

sturdy and young people have been drafted in, the new motel is even more tedious than the old. At least Meg Richardson, Sandy's wheelchair and poofy David Hunter had a certain camp integrity. Now there's only Roger Sloman pulling his faces at the front desk, while in the office the Man Who Shouts has an argument with the Woman Who Shouts, while the Teenager Who Sulks flops on to the sofa and looks miserable. Viewers have fled like rampaging buffalo.

Night And Day, by contrast, has one eye on the gleaming youthsoap *Hollyoaks* and another on **Cold Feet**. Obvious signs of material comfort in *Hollyoaks* characters have proved popular with its teen audience, who are otherwise willing to overlook scripts worse than *Brookside*'s and the fact that no one in Chester speaks with a Cheshire accent.

Cold Feet may be the more interesting comparison. ITV never wanted to commission it in the first place (too middle-class). Now, its mad scheduling of the new series on Sundays and Mondays shows it still hasn't a clue what to do with it. Writer Mike Bullen wants to end the series, as he feels it has run its course; ITV would happily have it on six months a year like *Peak Practice*. For *Cold Feet* has nine million loyal viewers, who don't care that *The Way We Live Now* is on the other side. It's a precious commodity, which is why this is still a good time to be going into meetings with executives and talking about projects that are "a bit *Cold Feety*". *Night And Day* is a bit *Cold Feety*. Admittedly it's a very small bit, invisible to the naked eye, but that was probably enough to swing it.

Unfortunately — and this is the rub — it isn't much good. Middle-class it may be, but *Night And Day* is still a soap made by ITV for peanuts. After a brightish start the scripts are already infested by cliché. The acting is wildly variable, despite some ambitious casting decisions (Sally Dexter! Glynis Barber out of *Dempsey and Makepeace*!). Then there's Gareth Hunt. Brave and possibly foolhardy, then, and destined for the chop before 2002 is out.

'Couch Potato'

MEDIA NEWS

EFFORTS to appease the focus groups who say BBC news correspondents are "cold" and "impersonal" are reaching ever more ridiculous heights on the BBC *Six O'Clock News*.

Orders have gone out to "name check" as often as possible. Hence Huw Edwards had more than a dozen of them in one programme on 20 November from the likes of Emma Simpson ("Well, Huw...") and the rest. Word even reached Rageh Omaar in Afghanistan who mentioned his cuddly studio anchor ("Huw, these are just proposals… etc") several times, bless him.

ITN's efforts to secure its contract to provide ITV with "news" included cutting the size of its bid from £45m to £36m. The results of that disastrous reduction are now beginning to be seen.

Two hundred jobs are to go and there are signs that correspondents are being diverted from expensive foreign and political coverage towards lifestyle and celeb-oriented non-stories, à la GMTV.

An early casualty of this approach is the rebranding of respected foreign correspondent Tom Bradby as a royal-watcher. Gushing PR merchants even lured the *Daily Hellograph* into doing a piece about "ITV's Prince Charming". "He will slip easily into the world of courtiers and aristocrats," drooled the *Telegraph*'s media hack, totally missing the point.

DUMB BRITAIN

This Morning, Midday Money, ITV

Colleen Nolan: To which member of the royal family is the Duke of Edinburgh married?
Contestant: Pass.

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: Who wrote the political treatise *Das Kapital*?
Contestant: John Major.

No Win, No Fee, BBC1

Paul Ross: What is the name of the Israeli Secret Service?
Contestant: I'll make an educated guess. The FBI.

DUMB AUSTRALIA

The Weakest Link, Channel 7

Cornelia Francis: When you have completely misunderstood the question, you are said to have got hold of the wrong end of the what?
Contestant: Dog.

★ The Little Book of Dumb Britain. Now on sale – £1.99 ★

GREG DYKE's commitment to save unnecessary expense and stop the "junkets" continues with a glossy invitation – sent twice in separate envelopes – to all news and current affairs staff to attend a "news festival".

Headlined "exhibition explore play", it promises seminars and debates along with "free food and drink" and "games with prizes". For those unable to join the junket, there's a free chocolate attached to each invitation.

LANGLEY Mill in the East Midlands is an ex-mining town which has in recent years become overrun by far-right thugs. In fact, the neo-nazis in town are now only outnumbered by the liberal journalists keeping tabs on them.

The grinding poverty and mindless violence that characterise the town made it an obvious magnet for writer Gordon Burn, who filed a lengthy missive from Langley Mill for the *Observer* a month ago. He based a large part of his heart-rending piece around the tale of Khan's Convenience Store, an Asian-run business which was a favourite target for local skinhead thugs.

Visiting the shop after one such attack, Burn noted that "the window had been reglazed. But there was a sign now on a piece of cardboard with a ragged, corrugated edge that said: 'Moving premises – shop closed'... I pressed the bell... I could sense some movement behind the blind, Saira Khan or her brother Abdul, presumably, but nobody came".

The pathos is slightly spoilt by the fact that the reason the Khans refused to answer the door to Burn is that they weren't brother and sister at all. They were part of an undercover film crew from Channel 4's *Sleepers* series who had been renting and running the shop from some months and were eager not to have their cover blown.

Plugged In

"What happened yesterday was utterly unforgivable – the killing of these journalists was done in cold blood for no reason.

"Sky News reporter Lisa Holland, whose taxi was behind the doomed reporters', deserves huge praise for remaining calm on TV yesterday..."

***Sun* editorial, 20 November**

Nominated by Paul Tomic.

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

"PERIOD drama given cold shoulder as viewers go for quirky comedy" was typical of the many headlines noting that ITV's comedy *Cold Feet* had managed a rating of 8.9m against the Beeb's adaptation of Trollope's *The Way We Live Now,* which got 5m.

Why so many papers fell for ITV's desperate spin is uncertain. After all, five million for a quality drama is actually quite good and the Beeb as a public service broadcaster was simply scheduling quality stuff peak time regardless of the ratings. And wasn't it ITV's own David Liddiment who recently claimed that ratings obsession was damaging to good television?

GOING LIVE

WHEN the BBC's London news programme went live to Heathrow airport on 13 November, it was to hear Gillian Joseph read out a press release from the British Airports Authority about Terminal 5.

The press release was also subtitled on screen, meaning that it had been available back in the studio for some time. "Heathrow airport certainly is a double-edged sword," Joseph revealed helpfully.

AT A conference this week to discuss the declining ratings for political programmes on TV, BBC executives heard a call from Andrew "Brillo Pad" Neill to "sharpen up their output".

Brillo is, of course, ideally qualified to tell others how to boost their audiences. He sharpened up the *European* so much it closed down soon after his relaunch. At another of his papers, *Scotland on Sunday*, circulation fell over the last year from 114,000 to 93,000. And *Sunday Business* has lost a third of its readers since Neill "sharpened up the output" by doubling the cover price and running more columns by himself.

One consequence of this week's deliberations is likely to be the ditching of the dreary *Despatch Box*, a political programme watched only by a few MPs and insomniacs, which is hosted nightly by... Andrew Neill.

THE *Sunday Express* devoted an entire page to a moving tribute to the late Mary Whitehouse, headlined "We Should All Thank The Queen of Clean."

Apparently, "if you have endured the *So Graham Norton* chat show on a Friday night, or if you remember *Sex and Shopping*, or if you have read the opinion of Channel 5 programmes director Dawn Airey that 'bosoms, balls and brutality are part of our mix', the only possible conclusion to reach is that she was absolutely right."

Interestingly, while the *Sunday Express* TV guide includes schedules for 17 satellite and cable channels, including Sky, Discovery, Carlton Cinema and TCM, there's no space to list the attractions of something called X Television.

This is a pity, as X is owned by Express proprietor Richard Desmond, and presumbly readers would welcome the opportunity to learn what's on offer from this sister media outlet – titles such as Voyeur, Dildo Dan, Surf Bums, The US Peeping Tom, Compulsive Behaviour, Eurochicks and Taboo 18.

***BENEATH The Veil*, the C4 documentary presented by Saira Shah, so caught the eye of Jack Valenti, head of the Motion Picture Association of America, he recommended to President Bush that it receive "additional and widespread air time".**

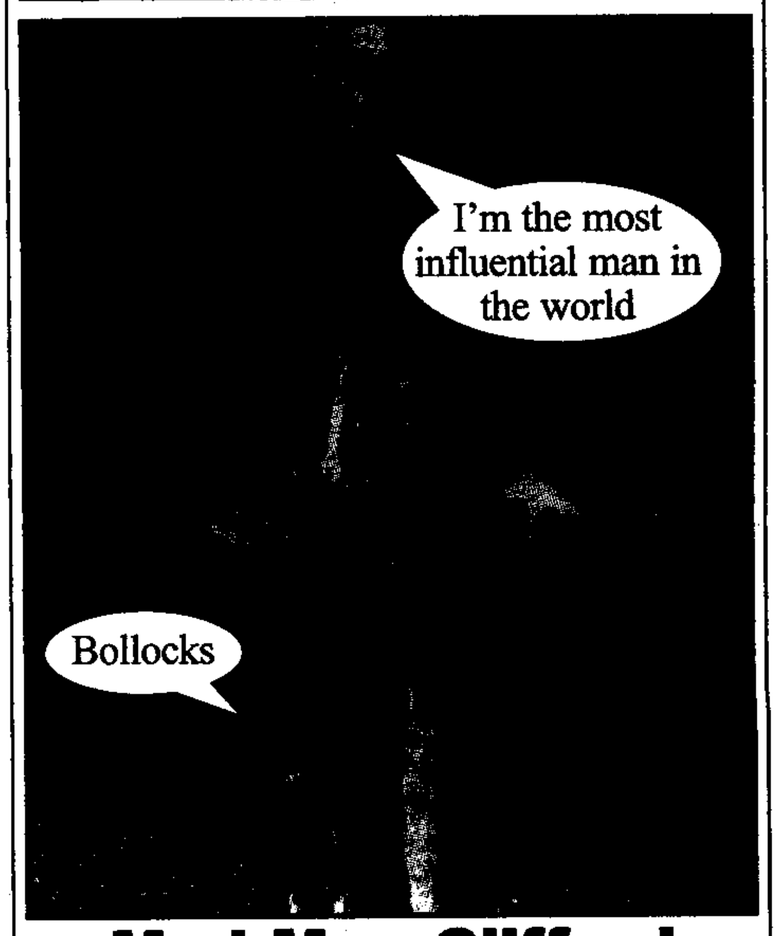
The reason? It contained uncompromising evidence of the brutality of the Taliban regime, including footage – bizarrely censored by the Americans – of a public execution. Unfortunately, encouraged by this unprecedented exposure on all the US networks, C4 decided to make a follow up programme, *Unholy War* (11 November), in which Shah returned to Afghanistan. This time the programme was made with the American market in mind and the result was embarrassing.

Shah became the focus of the whole project. There were shots of her crossing rivers ("my wet feet have frozen solid"), voice-overs full of self-discovery "one thing that it's taught me is that it's really tough going" and "I've learned that this is no time for quick fixes", and shots of Shah "engulfed by the human cost" in a refugee camp.

The biggest giveaway was the number of unexplained "fades to black" too – ideal for the placement of those all-important US commercial breaks.

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore



Mad Max Clifford

AD NAUSEAM

MORE good news for Tony Blair's much-vaunted e-topia. Not content with one £3m UK Online ad campaign which launched just as month-on-month internet use fell for the first time ever (see last issue), the government is now proposing another.

A further £2.5m has been handed to French agency Publicis to promote UK Online for Business, with a TV campaign that shows a running ticker homing in on a figure of 14 billion. The ad (voiced by leading business magnate Sue Lawley) claims this is the amount traded online so far this year, going on to suggest that this in itself is a good enough reason for other small businesses to start trading online too.

Those with a finely-tuned ear for Millbank guff will hear in the background the sound of Labour spinning furiously: the campaign is a last-ditch attempt to keep egg off its face in the light of Blair's target of an extra million small businesses trading online by 2002. Alas, once again the government's left hand doesn't seem to know what the right is doing. Barely a fortnight after the campaign broke, new DTI figures confirmed what everyone who watches the news had guessed already: e-commerce is going steadily down the pan and Blair's target will not be met. Meaning endless ad campaigns are just protracted whistling in the wind, with the taxpayer footing the bill.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

CINEMA
SCREEN 1
ZOOLANDER
GOD.... THAT WHOLE 'MAKING FUN OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY' THING...
...IT'S SO NOT IN ANYMORE !!!
TUT... YEAH..... TALK ABOUT 'LAST YEAR' !!!

DOING THE ROUNDS

STAFF in the department of cardiac surgery at the Bristol Royal Infirmary, which last week produced the best survival rates in the Dr Foster Opal Fruit league table, had hoped the result would help them get out of their grossly cramped and unsuitable premises (*Eyes passim*) into a spanking new heart centre.

Alas, the department of health has passed over the idea of relocation in Bristol, and the unit will get just a small slice of the £300m health secretary Alun Milburn has taken from elsewhere in the NHS to tinker with its waiting lists.

Milburn knows a thing or two about waiting. On 18 July he gave his initial thoughts on the Bristol inquiry and announced: "Today we are publishing information for patients, and specifically for parents, about the questions they should ask before consenting to treatment for themselves or their children." Thus far M.D. has been unable to find any evidence of these questions; doubtless they will appear when the government gives its considered response to the inquiry report on 29 November, just 18 weeks late.

Milburn's delay may be due to the embarrassing realisation that much of the information parents and patients would reasonably want before consenting to heart surgery is still not in the public domain. At the very least you need to be given a numerical risk of not surviving a particular operation to give legal consent. And given that parents in Bristol were given wrong or misleading information by their surgeon, this risk information has to be independently collected, externally validated and published – preferably not by the health firm Dr Foster.

Finally, numerical standards of safe surgery have to be defined for each operation to ensure swift action if a unit or surgeon's results become unacceptable. To date, no child heart unit other than Bristol or Alder Hey has published its results, and although the government has given information about adult heart bypass success rates from every unit to Dr Foster, the league table is relatively meaningless without any definition of an acceptable standard.

As statistician Jan Poloniecki observed in 1998, half of all doctors are below average. And even if all surgeons or units are equally good, half would still be below average by chance alone. What matters is not that Coventry's Walsgrave hospital has a three times higher death rate than Bristol, but whether their results breach a safety standard (say a 5 percent death rate) that warrants investigating. We would then know if the higher mortality is due to taking on difficult cases, as the Walsgrave believes, or not.

As yet, the government and the society of cardiothoracic surgeons have shied away from putting a number on unacceptable death risk for fear that surgeons who fall beneath it may sue for damage to reputation or loss of private earnings. But any reasonable patient would want to know if a quoted death risk is acceptable or not compared to other units in the country, so Milburn's going to have to do some maths.

He's also got to sort out the public interest disclosure act. The *Eye*'s exposure that health minister John Hutton, backed by DoH and department of trade lawyers, believes the Bristol inquiry was "incorrect" to suggest that whistleblower Steve Bolsin might not have been protected under the act has been challenged by inquiry (and treasury) solicitor Peter Whitehurst.

He believes "the evidence does not put it beyond doubt that Dr Bolsin would have been able to make a protected disclosure" and that the term "good faith" needs further clarification. Meanwhile Charles Phillips, assistant director of the DTI, disagrees. "The report criticises the act for requiring whistleblowers to make disclosures 'in good faith', which it suggests would remove any disclosure made with mixed motives. That is not our view. 'In good faith' does not we think mean 'with totally pure motives'; it simply means a disclosure was made honestly, not maliciously."

So the Kennedy inquiry has cocked up on a very important point. Or the government, with cross party support, has voted through a whistleblower protection act that may not protect whistleblowers. Either way, I think we should be told. Hopefully on 29 November.

'M.D.'

"Cheerio, Mr Rodwell, we're sending you abroad for your operation"

Down on the Fish Farm

AT LAST it has been admitted: the feed given to farm salmon is contaminated with potentially cancer-causing chemicals (PCBs or polychlorinated biphenyls).

Brian Simpson, chief executive of Scottish Quasi Salmon (*"Quality", shurely?*), the industry's representative body, said last week: "We are aware the EC is going to put limits on the levels of PCBs in animal feeds. Our own sampling indicates that the levels in our feeds at present are one-fifth or less than the proposed limits. But we would like to eliminate these contaminants completely."

Simpson was commenting after a Seap (Scottish environment protection agency) survey found high levels of PCBs below fake salmon cages along the west coast of Scotland. Scientific evidence suggests that PCBs and dioxins harm the natural environment and may be associated with learning difficulties in young children, and with reduced fertility in adults. Seap found "the highest concentrations in sediments were detected close to fish farms, suggesting the farms were the source of the PCBs".

Ross Finny, Scottish executive rural affairs and environment minister, should explain why he allowed this to happen. There are more than 340 salmon farms in the West Highlands and Islands of Scotland producing nearly 100 million fake fish each year. The untreated sewage these farms dump daily into coastal waters exacerbates the PCB problem. But Finny recently contemptuously dismissed calls from the Scottish parliament for a public inquiry into this dirty business.

'Old Trout'

SIGNAL FAILURES

Vision revision

ON THE *Today* programme last week transport secretary Stephen Byers criticised Sir Alastair Morton, outgoing chairman of the strategic rail authority (SRA), for lacking a vision for railways. Could that Alastair Morton be the Alastair Morton described by deputy prime minister John Prescott just two years ago as "a high-profile champion for all the people who use our railways and for the industry at large"?

The government's lack of vision contributed as much to the failure of the SRA under Morton as Morton's insistence that the SRA was not about "command and control" (ie strategy). In less than three years since Morton's appointment, "new" Labour has changed its ideas on transport so many times that the rail industry is in an unprecedented muddle, the SRA's name has become a joke and key SRA figures are leaving in frustration.

Morton's successor is Richard Bowker, whose main credential is that he was previously co-chairman of Virgin Rail – operator of one of the worst and most expensive intercity train services in Europe. Byers says that Bowker, unlike Morton, has a vision for the rail network. Whether that's the vision Bowker was implementing at Virgin until last month – cynically exploiting all possible means to maximise fares while delivering a shabby service – will not be clear until the SRA's long-delayed strategy is eventually published, having been postponed again this month.

Virgin in the manger

VIRGIN Rail is still allowed a monopoly on Britain's busiest mainline even though the project which supposedly justified that monopoly now lies in tatters.

Virgin and Railtrack joined forces in 1997 to draw up a wildly optimistic profit-sharing plan to upgrade the west-coast line from Euston to Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow. They promised a 140mph service by 2005 (about 10 years after British Rail might have delivered something similar had rail privatisation not intervened). The upgrade would cost Railtrack £2.2bn and leave Virgin Rail so awash with money it would be able to pay an annual premium to the government from 2001-02. Nobody in authority questioned whether these commitments could be delivered and the biggest mainline franchise was awarded to Virgin instead of rivals with more realistic plans.

The west-coast scheme was to consist of two passenger upgrades (Pugs): modernising the line and introducing a top speed of 125mph; and upgrading the line to 140mph (known as Pug 2). The expected cost of the infrastructure work has more than trebled and now Pug 2 has effectively been shelved – but a unique anti-competition rule devised to underpin Pug 2 remains.

The rail regulator granted Virgin exclusivity in 1998 because of "the possible impact of competition on the profitability and viability of the Pug 2 project". So Richard Branson has found himself running a monopoly in a system where competition is presumed and regulation of operators is minimal. That monopoly includes the lucrative trade between Manchester and London. Virgin has used its immunity to crank up fares obscenely and has had little incentive to improve its services (*Eyes passim*). Virgin wants passengers to believe its high fares cover its investment in new trains but Virgin will be leasing the trains, not buying them (*Eye* 1006).

When Pug 1 is finished the 125mph west-coast line will merely have attained parity with the east-coast and Great Western main lines (modernised by BR for 125mph). Does that really justify another 10 years of Virgin monopoly and agonising fare increases?

'Dr B. Ching'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

DANNY BOY

WHEN Danny Buckley appeared at Hull crown court last week he became the 23rd Doncaster councillor to be convicted of false accounting.

The Labour party's former chief whip on the council finally pleaded guilty to fiddling his expenses after nine months of prevarication, but not before the expensive business of calling in a jury and settling down for a four-day trial had been put in place.

Buckley is a collectors' item even by the standards of Donnygate brass neck. After his arrest he continued to act as chief whip for two weeks, suspending one councillor, Gerry McLister, for abstaining on a vote to close an old folks' home. He also continued to chair meetings of the scrutiny committee until finally dragged from his posts. While dispensing rough justice to others within the Labour group, Buckley was not himself actually a member of the party, having failed to pay his subs for three years.

Earlier this month the troubled Coalfields Regeneration Trust proudly announced on its website the recruitment of Buckley to the £20,000 post of area co-ordinator. Buckley had omitted to mention his impending appointment with m'lud at his interview, the scamp.

At the end of the hearing Judge Robert Moore said he assumed Buckley was of previous good character etc, etc. Not so, piped up CPS solicitor Ian Brownlee: Buckley has previous for stealing ice cream, drunk and disorderly conduct and assaulting a police officer. Judge Moore then announced that he was postponing sentencing until January and advised Buckley to "put his affairs in order".

PS: Buckley brings the total of convicted criminals still sitting on the supposedly squeaky-clean council to five.

● OSAMA'S boys had better not take their war against the infidel to Fife, and the Real IRA had better stay away, too. The council there has a cunning plan to defeat any terrorist threat. Staff at the council offices in Glenrothes have been issued with advice on how to deal with telephoned bomb threats. "Remain calm," it says, and ask a checklist of questions. After "Where is the bomb" and "What does it look like", etc, terrorists must be asked: "What is your name?" "What is your address?" and "What is your telephone number?" Presumably one then calls in the B52s and heads for the basement.

MAYORBALLS UPDATE

A PUFF piece has appeared in *PRWeek* on how Lewisham council paid Weber Shandwick Worldwide £100,000 to assist the council's publicity campaign prior to last month's mayoral referendum.

According to *PRWeek*, "the team developed a highly visible campaign with one core message... that was easy to understand". It had "eye-catching designs" and "the team went for saturation". There were maildrops, a special newspaper delivered to all homes, the council website was redesigned for the occasion and council leader Dave Sullivan gave interviews from a yellow sofa in the middle of a roundabout.

"The campaign was well received during the two week period, when stories appeared in the *FT*, the *Times*, the *Independent* and the *Guardian* as well as in regional publications." What's more, "the campaign caught the attention of other London local authorities, which have since contacted Lewisham about its electorate rallying activities."

Tucked away among all this PR bollocks was the factette that for its hundred grand Lewisham still only managed to achieve a pathetic 18.3 percent turnout — the lowest of all the councils to have held referendums on the subject this year.

DODGY BOILER

ALEX ALDRIDGE, leader of Labour-controlled Flintshire council, clearly enjoys the company of council staff at his home. So much so that he has regularly invited council employees to perform an array of work there, including installing security lighting, electrical works, artexing of ceilings, fitting a new fire and a boiler.

After questions were asked Flintshire's former internal auditor Andy Sutton conducted an investigation into how Aldridge had obtained his nice new boiler. He found the leader had paid a council employee cash-in-hand, without obtaining any receipts either for the boiler or the installation work.

Sutton, however, was stopped from writing the audit report. Shortly afterwards he was suspended from his job (*Eyes passim*). He is taking the council to an employment tribunal next year. Instead a report was prepared by Barbara Renshaw, the former county treasurer. She found no evidence of wrongdoing – but then she completely ignored the cash payments. Perhaps the tribunal will take a view on the advisability of council leaders getting council employees to work on their homes in exchange for a wodge of tenners.

PARTY SEASON

WHILE the *Evening Standard* and the *Torygraph* worked themselves into a Lib Dem-inspired lather last week about the fact that Lambeth's 400 housing benefit staff — recently freed from the clutches of Capita and already improving on its performance — are to have a "lavish" Christmas party courtesy of the council taxpayer, elsewhere in the council the spirit of Scrooge prevails.

The Dickensian-monikered George Grime, assistant director in the housing department, blanched when he learned that 50 housing finance workers were to be taken on a day-trip to Boulogne, paid for out of council tax, as a boost to low morale and a "thank you" for helping reduce Lambeth's debt by £50m. (It still stands at a splendid £800m, greater than

that of countries such as Botswana and Latvia.)

The trip, planned for 16 November, was called off by Grim at 24 hours notice after he had nightmares of the headlines that would follow should news of the trip leak. However, so late was the decision made to cancel the coach, two drivers and Channel crossing that the fares paid for the trip are unlikely to be reimbursed in full, if at all. P&O tells the *Eye* that a full refund at short notice requires a written explanation for the cancellation, which is then looked at "on its merits". Whether a claim on the grounds of "prevention of bad publicity" would suffice must be in doubt.

● A REPORT on the supervision of sex offenders, produced by social workers at Aberdeen city council, praises the efforts of the Barnardos Bridge project in Dundee in tackling child abuse. One of the factors that makes the project such a success, the authors note, is its "bottom up approach".

High Principals

UNTIL recently there was little evidence on the University of Luton website of last summer's massive "downsizing" exercise when a large number of humanities lecturers were made redundant and their departments merged with other faculties (*Eye 1030*).

The sadly depleted history and politics departments joined the faculty of health and social science; but prospective students who have browsed Luton's internet pages since the changes came into place at the start of September might be forgiven for thinking these are still thriving subject areas.

When the *Eye* visited the website on Wednesday 21 November there were 10 politics and public policy lecturers listed and seven history lecturers. In reality the majority of those whose names appeared were made redundant in September and are now teaching at other institutions up and down the country. Only three politics and two history lecturers remain.

The staff list for the department of environment, geography and geology was also wrong. Coincidence? Or a ruse to hide the rapid demise of the humanities departments from the students considering applying to Luton?

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

WELL, GIDEON, YOU'VE REACHED THAT STAGE IN LIFE WHEN YOU'RE READY FOR A MORE ADULT CHRISTMAS PRESENT...
ONE THAT I NEED TO PRESENT TO YOU "MAN-TO-MAN"
PLAYSTATION 2 ? ARSENAL STRIP? MOUNTAIN BIKE ?
I'VE DECIDED YOU'RE NOW OLD ENOUGH TO APPRECIATE YOUR VERY OWN PASTA MAKER
STORE GUIDE
LIFTS

Attention teachers: Teacher? New to Kuwait? Then you need the Kuwait Union for New Teachers. Become a KUNT, your friends can be KUNTs too- *Kuwait Times*

University of Zimbabwe letterhead

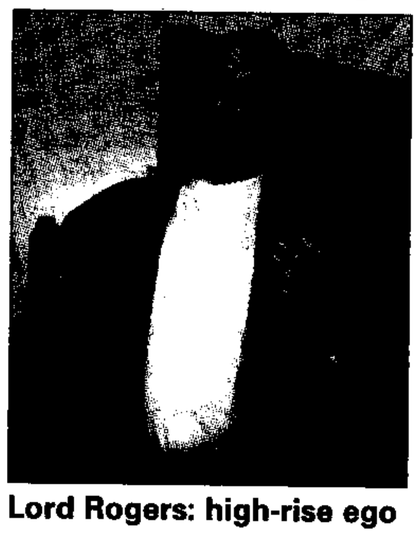
★ Better latté than never. Now on sale – £4.99 ★

NOOKS and CORNERS

I DISCUSSED the controversial proposal to reconstruct the Dunbar birthplace of John Muir in *Eyes* 1032 and 1037. I assumed the notion of gutting a perfectly sound and authentic listed building to commemorate a pioneering and internationally celebrated conservationist by erecting a sort of internal High Tec tower by the fashionable Edinburgh modernist Richard Murphy was so ludicrous and self-evidently nonsensical it would be laughed out of court. So I contented myself with emphasising the intimate connections between the John Muir Birthplace Trust, which has been offered £292,500 by the Heritage Lottery Fund for Scotland for the "conservation and interpretation" of the Muir Birthplace, and the officers and members of East Lothian council.

But I had reckoned without the cronyism and fawning modishness which distinguishes public life in Scotland – a culture which allows a handful of schemers to get away with erecting a £300m pretentious new Scottish parliament building that nobody asked for or wanted (*Eyes passim*).

Despite the objections of the Scottish Civic Trust, the Architectural Heritage Society for Scotland and many other bodies and individuals in both Scotland and the United States (where Muir is a great hero) activated by electronic publicity brilliantly organised by Graham White and the Save John Muir House Campaign, Allan Wilson MSP, the Scottish executive's deputy minister for sport, art and culture – please note the order in which these words appear north of the border – has told East Lothian council that he is granting planning permission and listed building consent without calling the case in for public inquiry. The Save John Muir House Campaign may now seek judicial review.



Lord Rogers: high-rise ego

All this suggests that conservation and heritage do not have a high priority in the exciting new devolved "new" Labour Scotland – as the parliament building farce confirms. As in England, what matters is fashion and fashionable architects. And now, in a "bonfire of the quangoes", the Scottish executive is abolishing both the Ancient Monuments Board for Scotland and the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland – two independent, voluntary and very cheap advisory bodies. The HBC was, indeed, the only non-party outside check on Historic Scotland which, stung by criticism that it is too busy stopping things happening, seems to have given away the John Muir Birthplace.

But some of Historic Scotland's decisions need to be questioned – such as that, in another long-running case, only to offer a grant of some £240,000 towards an exemplary and careful restoration scheme for Alexander "Greek" Thomson's amazing Egyptian Halls in Glasgow (*Eyes* 947 and 950) when it was prepared to give some four times this amount of public money to support much more destructive development proposals for the building only six years ago. Why?

BUT the problem may be not so much Scotland as "new" Labour. After all, the go-ahead has just been given for Terminal 5 at Heathrow — architect: Tony's friend Lord Rogers of Riverside — and then there are the gratuitous plans to fiddle with Trafalgar Square to gratify the ego of the other High Tec non-accountable superstar, My Lord Foster — who is also, of course, the architect of the Greater London Authority building imposed on London without vote or consultation.

It can be useful for busy architects to have a foot in the door. My Lord Rogers of Riverside, has tabled questions in the House of Lords about English Heritage, asking in particular how much its appearance at the Heron Tower public inquiry is costing. Architects like Rogers, of course, besides having no interest in or understanding of historic buildings, hate English Heritage as it has powers to protect us from the unfettered expression of their delicate geniuses.

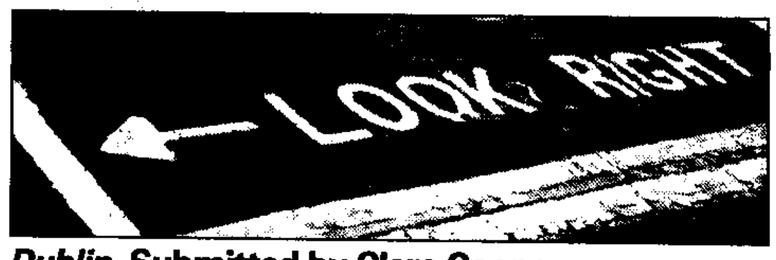
English Heritage is just doing its job by appearing at the public inquiry to object to the construction of the 37-storey Heron Tower in Bishopsgate, arguing that such an alarming monster will damage existing views of St Paul's and affect the public areas around Bishopsgate and the setting of St Botolph's Church. This tower (and lots more) is being supported by Mayor Ken Livingstone, whose star witness at the inquiry is none other than My Lord Rogers, his paid adviser on architecture and urbanism.

But oh dear: the bronzed and relaxed personality was not treated with the deference he now expects. Counsel for English Heritage pointed out that the Richard Rogers Partnership is working on a design for another tower in the City and two at Canary Wharf, so it is in his interest to see the Heron Tower rise. "You have a number of tall buildings at design stage. The mayor is hardly getting the most impartial advice because you are active in promoting tall buildings."

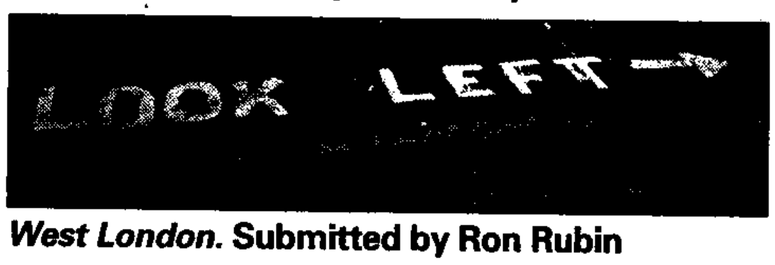
How very distressing the experience of cross-examination must have been. There is a word for this sort of behaviour, of course, so I am delighted to see that Rogers stars in "The Fat Cats Directory" in George Monbiot's frightening account of the corporate takeover of Britain, **Captive State.** ***He is cited not only as the ostensible architect of Terminal 5, "the biggest greenfield development ever proposed in Britain", but also as chairman of the government's Urban Task Force advocating higher urban densities to protect the countryside! Hooray for English Heritage!***

'Piloti'

I-SPY



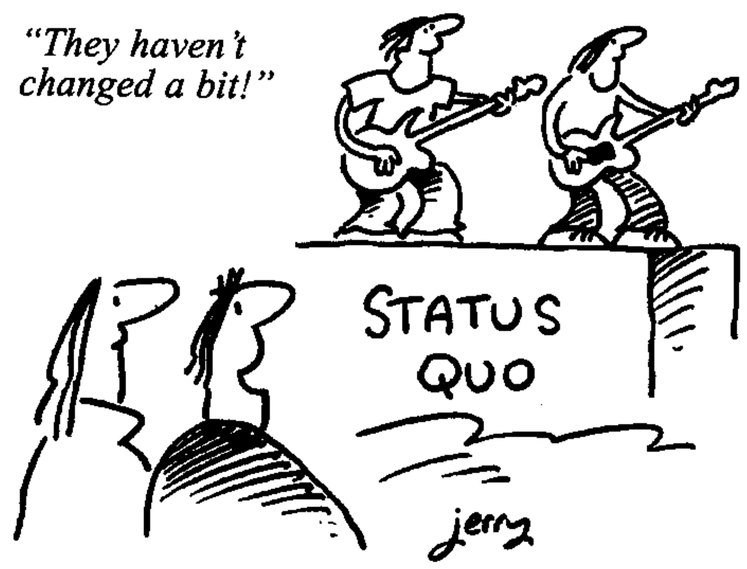
Dublin. **Submitted by Clare Cooper**



West London. **Submitted by Ron Rubin**

£10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

"They haven't changed a bit!"



MUSIC & MUSICIANS

IT'S been a bad year for the South Bank Centre (SBC) and it's getting messier by the minute now that the board and its aggressive, property-developer chairman Elliott Bernerd have decided to do the exact opposite of what was announced as the necessary next step only a few months ago.

First there were the lacklustre celebrations for the Festival Hall's 50th anniversary – launched for inexplicable reasons by that exemplar of the classical music tradition, Joanna Lumley, and generating something less than brotherly affection among the hall's "resident" orchestras and maestros as they scrambled for the spotlight in the anniversary schedules.

Kurt Masur, the veteran conductor of the LPO, will not forget that the chief concert was passed over his head to Valery Gergiev who isn't "resident" at all. And it's no surprise to find that he has now withdrawn from the Beethoven symphony cycle he was due to conduct at the Hall during November-December. For reasons of health.

But the real problems began in the summer when it was announced that the SBC's mild-mannered chief executive Karsten Witt would be resigning after barely two years in the job because – as the statement said – "the role of chief executive should no longer exist". He would leave next year, we were told, and not be replaced. Now a new announcement tells us he's leaving with immediate effect and the board is looking for his "successor".

A South Bank spokesperson has tried to explain this complete reversal of intent by saying the new chief executive will be more of a "buildings person" than, as was the case before, an "arts person". But if that's the case, what on earth is Nicholas Kenyon, director of the Proms, doing on the shortlist?

Whatever game Mr Bernerd (himself a "buildings person") and his board are playing, it doesn't *look* as though they've planned their moves with any forethought. And since the long-awaited redevelopment of the South Bank is likely to start in January – after 13 years of muddle and prevarication and at a cost of £200m, most of it public money – this is hardly the time to be playing games at all. Time, you might think, for a new and more effective chairman to move in and take control.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

Letters

Read that again

Sir,

I know you pride yourself on your inaccuracies and misreporting, but the typo on page 3 (Private Eye wins libel action) is unforgivable. "Loses" isn't spelt anything like "wins".

Congratulations on your famous victory – I thought we were all going to have to fork out a fiver to bail you out again!

All the best,
BOB SUTTON,

Exeter.

A lawyer writes...

Sir,

Your report of your victory in the Condliffe case gives the impression, by reason of its headline, and the publication of my photograph on page 7, under the headline "The Losers' Gallery" that, as a number of your readers have pointed out to me, I was in some way concerned with the conduct and preparation of that action. I should be grateful if you would give me this opportunity of making it clear that, having retired as Senior Partner of Peter Carter-Ruck and Partners over three years ago, I was in no way whatsoever concerned with that case, had no contact whatsoever with the client, who was introduced to the firm by another partner, and at no stage, even after my retirement as Consultant to the firm, was I asked for my advice, either in its conduct or in relation to the decision to deal with it on a contingency fee basis.

Yours faithfully,
PETER F. CARTER-RUCK.

The editor writes...

Dear Peter,

As you say, you were senior partner during five of the years that this case was being run by your firm and if you did not know what was going on then perhaps you should have done. Were all actions potentially costing the firm millions of pounds of no concern to you?

All the best.
IAN HISLOP.

Asian babe

Sir,

Contrary to the assertion in HP Sauce, Ranji Swamney is not the first female to be appointed a sheriff in Scotland – we've had them for aeons! – but she is the first Asian female sheriff.

Keep up your winning ways!

Yours aye,
GLORIA MUNDI,

Edinburgh.

Derby & Moan

Sir,

Re Piloti, Eye 1040. You should get out more often. 1. The bus station in Derby is an ugly pseudo-Art Deco building that is both inefficient and long past its sell-by date. 2. 14,000 people is only 5% of the population. 3. The Cockpit multi-storey is (unsurprisingly) in the centre of the Cockpit – a big roundabout, formerly the site of an ice factory. I'll agree that it's not very pretty – but it's nowhere near the River Gardens (where the riverside walks have been attractively refurbished). 4. The important railway buildings are still there (and all well restored) – the Railway Cottages, the Brunswick Inn, Midland House and the Railway Institute, among others. Only the station has been replaced – and a good job too!

Regards,
DAVID REGAN,

Via e-mail.

Albert memorial

Sir,

In an otherwise excellent piece I must correct Piloti (Eye 1041) on one point.

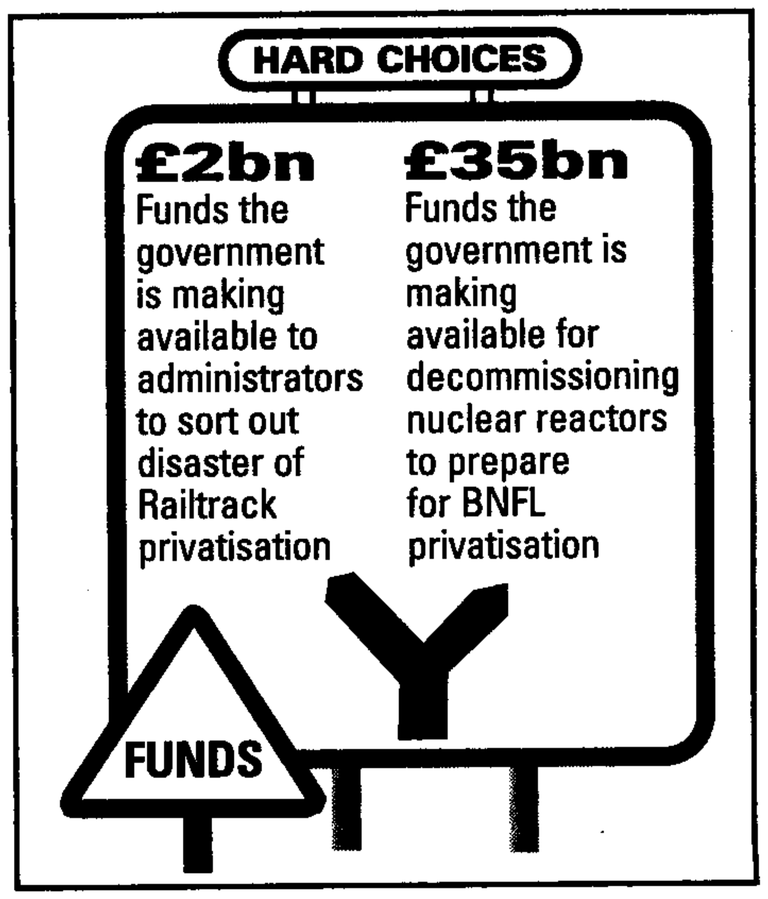
To say that Michael Heseltine saved the Albert Dock from the "brutish city council" in the days of Derek Hatton is historically incorrect.

Successive city councils were agreeing schemes to demolish the dock while Degsy was still at school; indeed scale models showing 300ft+ office towers were still on display in Liverpool planning department when I worked there in the early 1970s.

Following the Toxteth riots in 1981 (Liberal council at the time), Heseltine toured the city and recognised the stunning potential of the Albert Dock. Work to restore the dock was under way by the time Degsy/Labour took control of the council in May 1983. The funding for the project had nothing to do with the council.

Yours sincerely,
ANDREW PINK
(former speechwriter and advisor to Degsy 1983-7),

Wirral.


HARD CHOICES
£2bn
Funds the government is making available to administrators to sort out disaster of Railtrack privatisation
£35bn
Funds the government is making available for decommissioning nuclear reactors to prepare for BNFL privatisation
FUNDS

Lucky number

Sir,

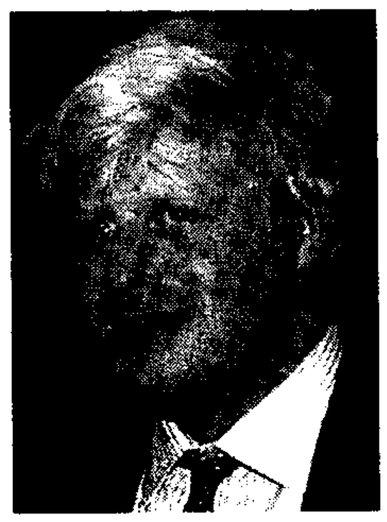
You are right that 451 Fahrenheit is the temperature at which paper and indeed money burns, but the rest of your article (page 9, issue 1040) is unfortunately not quite as hot!

Reports of the death of the451 have been greatly exaggerated in the British press. In fact it's alive and well, as a cursory look at our website would have shown, it having been bought by its managers with no disruption to service.

Yours sincerely,
WILLIAM FELLOWS,

Chief reporter, the451.

Lookalike



Fuzzy Fur Feet

Johnson

Sir,

I wonder if any of your other readers have noticed the astonishing similarity between Mr Boris Johnson MP and Fuzzy Fur Feet, from Dr Seuss's 'The Foot Book'? Do you think by any chance they might be related? I think we should be told.

Yours faithfully,
FRANK DANES,

Cambridge.

1963 The first episode of 'Dr Who' was broadcast, with William Hartnell as Dr Who and Anna Ford as his assistant.

X-Trax for Radio magazine

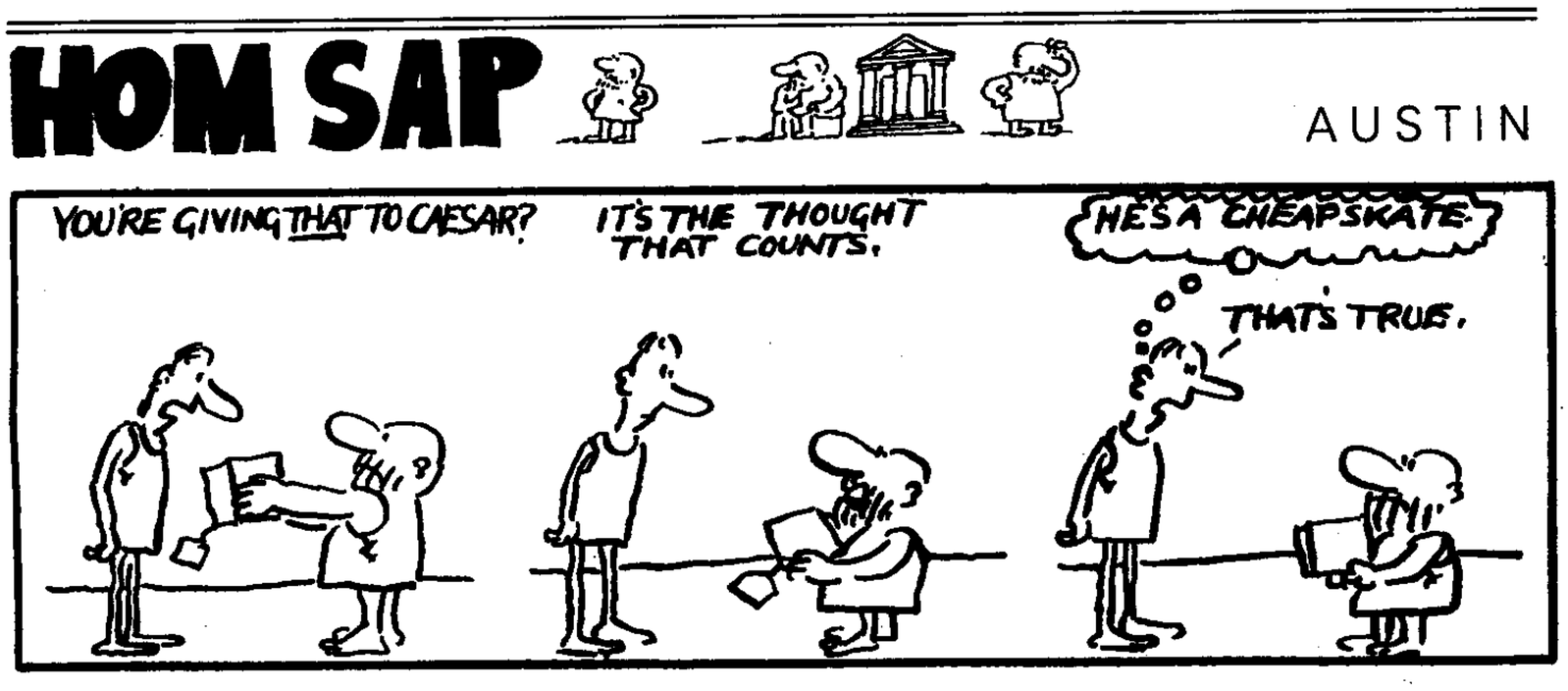
Disharmony

Sir,

The BBC's dumbing down of Radio 3 is clearly paying dividends across the networks. Immediately after the wreath-laying ceremony at the Cenotaph, the Massed Bands played Jeremiah Clarke's Prince of Denmark's March (also more popularly known as the Trumpet Voluntary). Radio 4 identified it as by Henry Purcell, BBC1 as a piece by Handel. Honestly, you think they would know better. I bet Classic FM got it right.

Yours faithfully,
ADRIAN REYNOLDS,

Yateley, Hants.



"You're charging us for dropping litter?"

Lookalike

Bin Laden

Knox

Sir,

There seems to be a distinct physical and mental resemblance between the religious reformer John Knox, buried beneath what is now a car park (author of the First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women) and Osama bin Laden. I wonder if they are by any chance related?

Yours in disillusion,
GOD.

"Creativity – Putting the lost 'c' back in the English cirri ulum"

Oxford Brookes University

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

Tony Adamson: *Can you tell us how it feels to win or is it too early?*
Padraig Harrington: *I can tell you exactly how it feels, I just can't find the words to describe it.*
BBC RADIO 5 LIVE
(Stuart Herridge)

"And Matt Dawson, who has been dropped by England, is this morning in hospital suffering from concussion."
Radio 4 Today Programme
(Norman Wells)

"And he (Zidane)... will have a private pool, with a gardener thrown in."
DES CAHILL (presenter)
Irish Radio RTE 1
(Declan Martin)

"Arsenal could have got away with a nil nil if it wasn't for the two goals."
DESMOND LYNHAM, ITV
(George Hardy)

"We're reaping now what we failed to sow then."
CONOR FAUGHNAN, Today FM
(Joe Clancy)

MMR: The Doctors Reply...

Sir,

"More needle over MMR" (1038) criticised our report in Archives of Diseases in Childhood in which we reviewed the evidence on the purported link between MMR vaccine and autism for our colleagues in child health.

The intention was not to "rubbish" Andrew Wakefield but to examine the scientific evidence. Unfortunately, since the research suggesting a link between MMR, autism and bowel disease has been almost exclusively conducted by Andrew Wakefield and colleagues, any criticism of the evidence may be construed as criticism of the author rather than the science.

You state that we made "great claims" for the "Finnish study". It is unfortunate that you failed to notice that we were not referring to the recent much quoted study by Patja, but to two more rigorous studies published in 1986 and 1998. We also cited not only the original 1999 Taylor paper, but a more recent paper in which the data were re-analysed to allow for the diagnosis of autism up to three years following MMR vaccine. This re-analysis confirmed no association between MMR vaccine and autism.

In referring to a regimen of the three single vaccines never having being used in this age group, we meant exactly that. This fact is fundamentally important. Single measles vaccines were indeed used in the UK from 1967 to 1988, and are still recommended by WHO in some circumstances. Rubella vaccine was commonly used in secondary school girls. This is entirely different from the regimen that some professionals are advocating. It is not possible to predict, from this experience, the safety and efficacy of the proposed regimen ie single measles, mumps and rubella vaccines at yearly intervals. Following the introduction of the combined MMR vaccine there was a significant reduction in these diseases.

We assume that the reference to the outbreak of measles in a highly immunised population concerns a paper published in the South African Medical Journal in 1994 ("The 1992 measles epidemic in Cape Town – a changing epidemiological pattern" Coetzee et al). The authors concluded not that there was a difference in efficacy between the combined MMR and the single measles vaccine, but that the MMR had not been stored properly. This emphasises the importance of reading the original scientific research, in full, rather than relying on someone else's interpretation. This also applies to the 1988 paper by Wakefield et al, often quoted as the basis for the fears about the safety of MMR vaccine. However, in the paper the authors themselves said "we did not prove an association between measles, mumps and rubelld vaccine and the syndrome described".

Our "selective" questioning of the use of two specific strains of mumps vaccine was to highlight the problems inherent in the use of unlicensed products. Some children have been given these vaccines and are now either inadequately protected or ran the risk of developing meningitis.

The Archives paper reviewed the evidence to date concerning a purported association between MMR vaccine, autism and bowel disease, it was not intended to provide a complete review of the safety profile of MMR vaccine. In your piece you gave the impression that the infrequent associations of idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura (ITP) and convulsions and MMR vaccine have only just been revealed. They have been recognised for many years, albeit at a much lower incidence than occurs with natural infection.

We stated in the article that we have received funding from vaccine manufacturers (none of which has been personal profit). It would be professional suicide to take a particular stance on an issue for reasons other than the scientific evidence. We are not alone in concluding that the evidence does not support an association between MMR vaccine and autism or bowel disease.

In presenting an unbiased picture, you will of course be reporting the latest paper by Fombonne in which he reported no association between MMR vaccine and regressive autism as originally suggested by Dr Wakefield?

We stand by our conclusion that: "While the final decision rests with the parents, the evidence of the safety and efficacy of MMR vaccine is so overwhelmingly conclusive that health professionals should have no hesitation in recommending its use."

Yours sincerely,
DAVID ELLIMAN, Consultant in Community Child Health,
St George's Hospital, London.

HELEN BEDFORD, Lecturer in the Epidemiology of Child Health,
Institute of Child Health, London.

Sir,

Re: "More Needle Over MMR", 3 October 2001. I am writing to you to correct several significant factual inaccuracies which appeared in the above article in Private Eye earlier this month.

Your report implies that the media coverage of the "Archives of Disease in Childhood" paper suggested that this was new research, rather than a review of previous research. No attempt was made by the PHLS to present this as anything other than an overview. Indeed, as your own article points out, I described it as such in my commentary; and the PHLS press office was at pains to point out to journalists who called us that this was not "new research".

You state that the policy of using separate vaccines is fully sanctioned by the WHO – it is not. The WHO fully endorses the use of the triple MMR vaccine as the best way of protecting children against the disease; it has never endorsed the use of single measles, mumps and rubella vaccines.

I stand by the view that there is no evidence about the safety and effectiveness of single vaccines used in place of MMR. You are correct to say that there are studies of single vaccines used in isolation, such as the 1994 measles vaccine study. However, there is no evidence looking at the safety or effectiveness of giving single measles, mumps and rubella vaccines, separated by a time interval, to the same child as part of a routine immunisation schedule. Parents who have expressed concern about MMR have often cited the interaction of the three elements as a key concern; the lack of evidence about how three single doses will interact is therefore likely to be of particular concern to those parents.

The separate measles and mumps vaccines being imported are not licensed in this country; where doctors give such vaccines, they do so on an unlicensed, named patient basis.

You might like to note that I have done work investigating adverse reactions to vaccines; as you mention in your article, I have published (and publicised) work which looked at the association between MMR and idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura (ITP), a rare rash disorder. The study concluded that the measles and rubella vaccine components of MMR were associated with an increased rate of ITP, but that the reaction was rare, and relatively mild compared with the effect of the diseases measles, mumps and rubella themselves.

I also led the research work which showed a link between a strain of mumps vaccine (the Urabe strain) and increased rates of viral meningitis. In this case the work led to the vaccine being withdrawn altogether. To suggest as you do that I am not prepared to be critical of vaccines when they are unsafe is simply not supported by the facts.

Finally, you state that my work on MMR paved the way for its licensing. In fact, the work I coordinated on MMR was not part of the licence application at all. The vaccine licence was granted on the basis of work done elsewhere.

I hope this clarifies the situation.

Yours sincerely,
DR ELIZABETH MILLER,
Head, PHLS Immunisation Division.

Letter from **Israel**
from Our Own Correspondent

TERRORISM is the topic of the year, and whatever the current focus, history shows that we in Israel have a certain historical experience.

Take the bombing of American targets. Our chaps bombed the US cultural centres in Cairo and Alexandria as early as 1954, planning to let Abdul Nasser's new Egyptian government take the blame. Unfortunately the scam went wrong and our defence minister Pinhas Lavon had to resign, though the director-general of his ministry, Shimon Peres, managed to hang on. Today he is Ariel Sharon's foreign minister.

Or take political assassinations. If you ever wondered why Yasser Arafat's lieutenants are hard to understand, the answer is simple: we shot most of his organisation's top foreign language speakers. In fact in one glorious year, 1972, our Mossad secret service managed to kill both the PLO's political representative in Rome, Wael Zouetar, and his counterpart in Paris, Mahmoud Hamdan.

Admittedly we make the odd mistake. There was the embarrassing 1974 incident in Lilienhammer, when a Mossad hit squad shot dead Moroccan waiter Ahmed Bouchiki in front of his heavily pregnant Norwegian wife, having mistaken him for a PLO man.

Still, we maintain a sense of proportion and have never believed in simply taking an eye for an eye. In 1982 when an assassin from the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon wounded (but not killed) our London rep, Shlomo Argov, we invaded Lebanon and more than 20,000 people there died, mostly civilians.

Then there is the bombing of local public buildings, one of our specialities. In recent months we have shelled not just West Bank police stations, but hotels, an orphanage and the Bethlehem maternity hospital. (Not that many Palestinian women reach the hospital. Our boys at the checkpoints surrounding their townships are particularly mistrustful of women claiming to be in labour and so refuse to let them through.)

None of this would have happened, of course, if the Palestinians would agree to live happily while surrounded by our soldiers and settlers. But they won't and we must protect ourselves. Not for us any lily-livered effort to apprehend the actual perpetrators. We prefer hostage taking. This is certainly what we did when some Palestinians recently shot that nice man, ex-general Rehavam Zeevi, the founder of a party whose sole platform was the expulsion of all Arabs. Such a view had resulted in his being invited into Mr Sharon's government as tourism minister.

Anyway, whenever that sort of thing happens we just hold the entire population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip at gunpoint and station tanks in their streets. Then we smash the place up (just look at Manger Square after we finished with it!) and kill a few dozen locals of mixed age and sex.

And, oh yes, we also use helicopter gunships to blow to smithereens any Palestinian we suspect of planning any attacks on us, though not usually the actual perpetrators. Those we expect Yasser Arafat to hand over, in exchange for the goodwill we have shown in our peace talks with him, which have been dragging on for a mere eight years. Why are those Palestinians in such a rush?

That we have spent those years building thousands of new settler homes in the West Bank is a mere accident, not a lack of sincerity. True, this may have involved confiscating Palestinian land, arresting its owners and shooting demonstrators, which slows down agreement; but it makes sense: we just like holding peace talks so much we never want them to end.

Of course, one cannot negotiate with just anyone, and so we are currently helping improve Arafat's administration by picking off any unsuitable figures. And we don't just mean military men: one of those killed by us was Dr Tahbed Thabed, the director-general of the Palestinian health authority.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

o "I'm convinced that this could be a big hit," Norway's new Fisheries Minister, Svein Ludvigsen told reporters, "and could be turned into an exclusive coastal experience for foreign tourists. It's important to reduce the seal population along our coastline to restore balance, and our tourist industry needs a boost. So why shouldn't we offer the experience of a lifetime to foreigners who want to go clubbing in the fjords?"

Warming to his theme, Ludvigsen explained that "sea mammals are a bigger consumer of fish than we humans, and we're shirking responsibility if we adopt the views of Brigitte Bardot. Our fishermen currently have an annual quota of twelve hundred baby seals to cull, but interest in seal clubbing is low, and only half of those are being hunted at present. We sell hunting licences to tourists so they can shoot moose, so why not let them club baby seals too? It's fun, and not nearly as messy as you might think. A dedicated hunter could easily club twenty or thirty animals in a week, and we need to kill more seals."

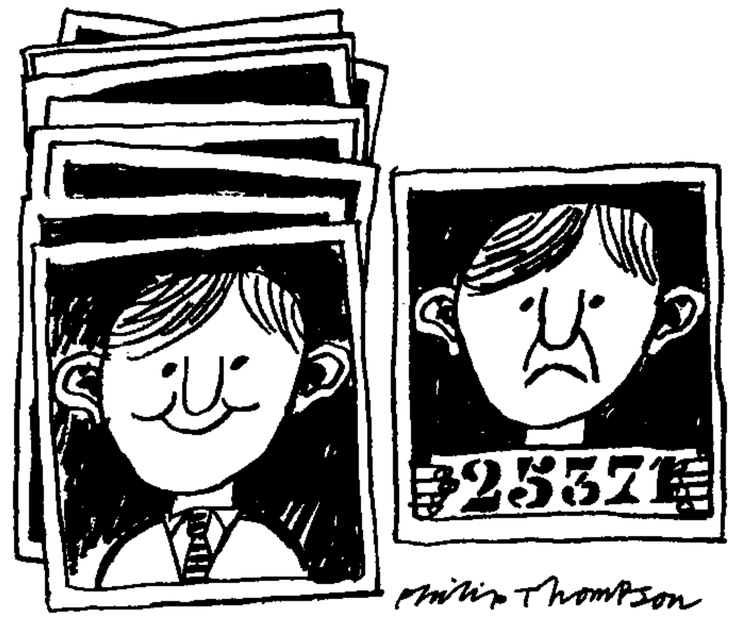
His comments immediately sparked outrage among environmentalists and animal rights activists, who have long criticised Norway's annual seal hunt. "What next?" asked one green campaigner. "Will they advertise it as a Club eighteen-to-thirty holiday?" *(Aftenposten, 5/10/01. Spotter: Rachel and Darren C. Le Geyt)*

— o —

o *"By any stretch of the imagination, this was hardly the crime of the century," defence agent Eamonn McGeehan told Paisley Sheriff Court, "and how my client ever expected to get away with it is beyond me. He had already attended at the office, and was known to the staff there. Coupled to that, he was not wearing a hat or any disguise. To try to steal a CCTV camera while it is filming you seems very stupid, and I think it's fair to say that he hadn't fully thought it through."*

Earlier, the court had heard from police how Charles Warwick, 17, had hatched a plot to steal a CCTV camera from his local Social Work office. "Staff in the offices couldn't believe their eyes when they saw Mr Warwick trying to wrench the apparatus from its mounting in a corridor. He was looking directly into the lens, and giving them dozens of razor-sharp close-ups. By the time he'd finally ripped it from the fixture and run off, the staff had already looked up his address, which they had on file. They telephoned us, and we were at his house waiting for him when he got back home. What was most astonishing was that he was utterly amazed at our brilliant detective work. Apparently, he hadn't realised that the images from the camera are stored on a videotape in another location. He thought the tape was inside the camera. It's not for me to say, but I think he may be mentally retarded."

Deferring sentence, Sheriff Ian Duguid told Warwick: "You are pretending to be mentally retarded to get attention. And if you do it again, you

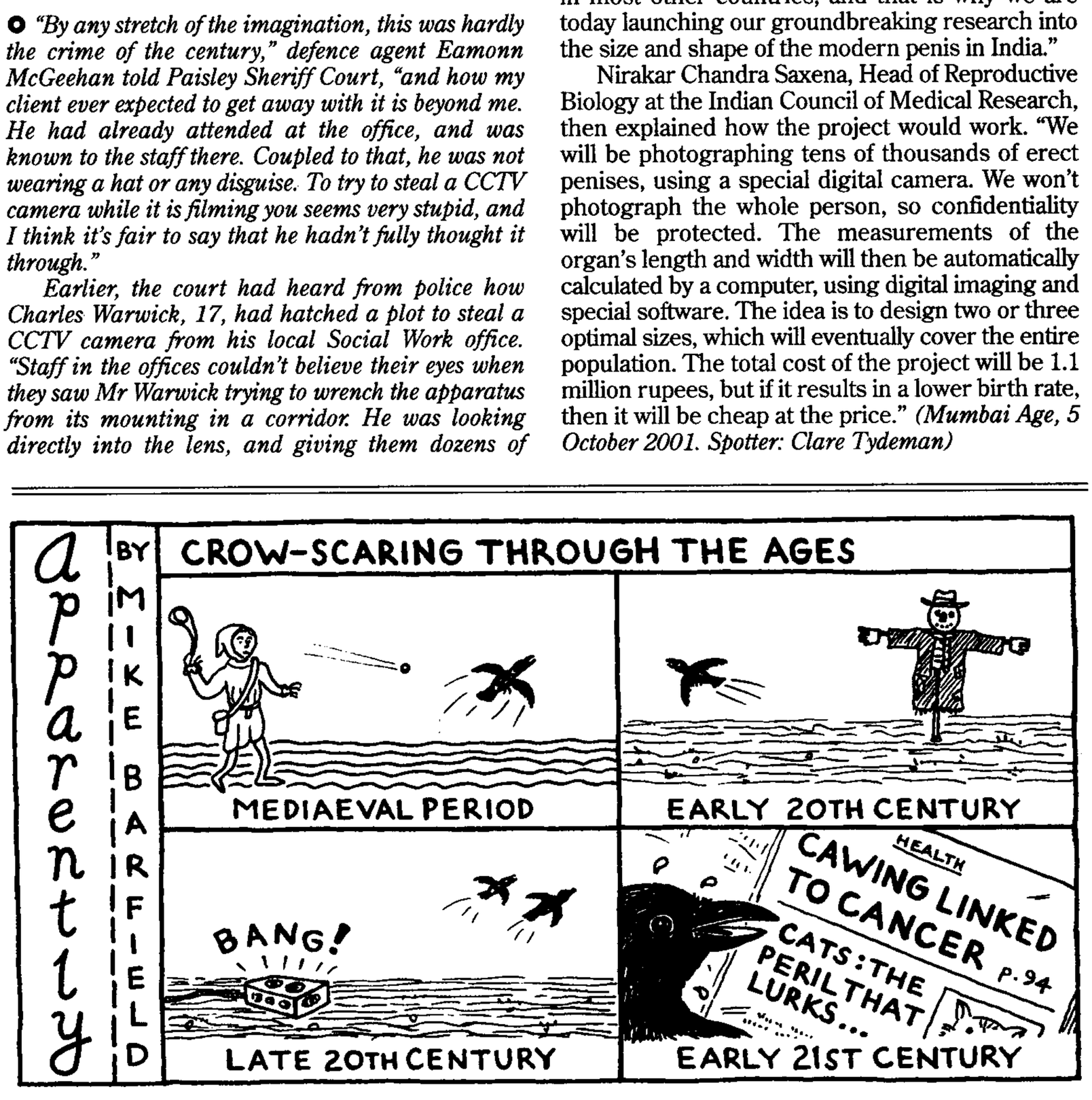


will get a lot of attention. Six months of the close variety." (Paisley Daily Express, 25/10/01. Spotter: Neil McLean)

— o —

o "The condom is currently not optimised for India," Professor Sujoy Kumar Guha of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences told a press conference in Delhi, "and this is a cause for great concern. There is a tendency for the condom to rupture, or for spillage to occur if it is too tight or too loose, when the size is not appropriate, or if it is uncomfortable. We are worried about the 15% failure rate of condoms, which is much higher than in most other countries, and that is why we are today launching our groundbreaking research into the size and shape of the modern penis in India."

Nirakar Chandra Saxena, Head of Reproductive Biology at the Indian Council of Medical Research, then explained how the project would work. "We will be photographing tens of thousands of erect penises, using a special digital camera. We won't photograph the whole person, so confidentiality will be protected. The measurements of the organ's length and width will then be automatically calculated by a computer, using digital imaging and special software. The idea is to design two or three optimal sizes, which will eventually cover the entire population. The total cost of the project will be 1.1 million rupees, but if it results in a lower birth rate, then it will be cheap at the price." *(Mumbai Age, 5 October 2001. Spotter: Clare Tydeman)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

And a pretty irritable hello it is too from your Vicar. By now most of you will have heard the rumour that Mr Brown and I have fallen out and we are not talking to each other. Thanks very much indeed to the parishioner who started this hurtful gossip which has snowballed out of all proportion. I am not going to name her, but Mrs Mowlam will know who I mean and when she examines her conscience, as we all must do from time to time (particularly her), I hope she feels suitably contrite. I also hope that she continues to take her medication and to keep away from the bottle which, I know she won't mind me saying, has been the cause of so many of her difficulties over the years.

OK, let's talk about what this is all about. Gordon and I are friends who go back a long way. And, like all real friendships, we have our ups and downs. Gordon, as he himself will admit, is not the easiest person in the world to get along with. One of his big problems, as I am sure he won't mind me pointing out to you all, is his bad temper. Everyone in the parish knows how surly he can be, often refusing to talk to anyone and sitting there morosely making everyone feel uncomfortable.

But, hey! Aren't we all like that sometimes? (Obviously I'm not, but Gordon certainly is!)

Look – friends have got to put up with this sort of thing. If Gordon is bitter, jealous and has a terrible chip on his shoulder about how popular I am in the parish then it is my duty as a friend to take it on board.

If he resents me flying around the world solving everyone's problems whilst he sits at home making a mess of the parish finances, then it could be argued that I should sack him.

But I'm not like that. I'm Gordon's friend and friends stick together, or at least they do until things get so bad that one of them has to get rid of the other one.

But, let me stress that this situation has not happened and all the rumours are just blah blah blah.

So with that dealt with, can we *please* focus on the issues that really matter – my mission of "world-building" in the new world of today.

Yours, Tony Blah

Mr Brown Writes...

Mr Campbell has asked me to write a short note saying that the Vicar and I are great friends and that there is no rift in our relationship. I told him that I would be happy to oblige, but sadly I do not have the time, since I am very busy sorting out the parish finances. This task is not made any easier, incidentally, by people flying around the world promising the earth to everyone they meet. G.B.

A Correction

When the Vicar wrote to a parishioner recently and promised him that he would sort out all his worries about education and health and transport "toomorrow", this was a misprint. He did not of course mean to write "toomorrow" but "as soon as my new measures come on stream and the target indicators are realistically positioned." A.C.

Parish Postbag

Dear Sir,

May I just point out that the Vicar has been entirely vindicated in his courageous stand against the forces of evil. I would like to thank him on behalf of everyone in the parish for his leadership and example in these dark days when he was under constant attack from wobblers, sneerers, peacemongers and other Guardian readers.

Yours in admiration,
Polly Toynbee (Ms),
Rusbridger Mansions.

The editor reserves the right not to cut brilliant letters from discerning readers and to thank such correspondents for their wisdom and courage in supporting the Vicar in everything he does. A.C.

PARISH NOTES

There was a good turn-out for the annual remembrance day service when the Vicar commemorated all those who had fallen in Two World Towers. The Vicar wore an Afghan Heroin Poppy and read out the well-known lines "At the prompting of the Sun we shall remember them".

Some of the older parishioners grumbled about how the previous wars should have got a look in but everyone else agreed it was a very moving service. The Vicar concluded, "We shall not grow old, as those on the left grow old".

The Last Second Post was played.

Women's Institute

Mrs Cherie Booth gave a most interesting talk on "The Oppression of Women in Afghanistan" with slides. Mrs Booth explained how in recent years women in this primitive part of the world have not been allowed to become rich lawyers and leave their husbands at home to look after the baby. This was the reason that an invasion of Afghanistan had become necessary and she hoped that the WI would all be firmly behind her and, of course, behind the vicar who shared her point of view entirely.

A collection for the promotion of women's rights in Afghanistan was held at the end and the impressive sum of £3.74 pence was raised. Mrs Jowell proposed a vote of thanks to Ms Booth and Mrs Short seconded it "under duress". A.C.

A charming sketch of the Vicar's wife by local artist Mr de la Nougerde

★ St Albion Parish News, Book Four. Now on sale – £4.99 ★

SCOTTISH POLITICIAN ADMITS 'NOT HAVING AFFAIR'

by Our Scottish Staff **Brillo McPad**

MR DOUGLAS McClean, MSP, has told a specially called news conference that he has never had an affair with a member of the party nor fiddled his expenses.

Sitting beside his stony-faced wife, Mrs Squeaky McClean, the contrite Labour member for the Isles of Muck and Lairgover, apologised for letting down the party.

"I realise that this is not the conduct that people expect of a Scottish politician in this day and age.

"I shall be resigning forthwith and I shall leave the political field clear for those more worthy of high office."

Mr McLegover (MSP) now becomes First Minister of Scotland.

TODAY'S TV CHOICE

■ **Couples Shagging In Ibiza** Channel 4 lifestyle show presented by Davina McStoat 9.00pm.

■ **Sex Vampires Rampage** Channel 5 adult film 1.45pm.

■ **Live Swearing From Uttoxeter** Channel 4 sport with Paul Ross.

■ **Whose Knob Is It Anyway?** BBC1 9.00pm. Blue quiz show hosted by Rory McBeard and Jonathan Dross. (A Toppo Thompson Production.)

■ **The Bonking Chef** BBC2. Thai cuisine for ladyboys, served up by she-male celebrity chef Jamie Nigella.

■ **Why Mary Whitehouse Was Wrong** Documentary, Channel 4. Lily Savage reassesses the reputation of the late TV clean-up campaigner *(That's enough TV. Ed.)*

THAT JOHN MORTIMER INTERVIEW

NUMBER 994

AGREEABLE restaurant... "bit unsteady on my pins"... "more champagne?"... "twinkle in eye"... "still fancy a bit of the other"... "best friends are murderers"... "can't put on socks any more"... "isn't Blair ghastly?"... "blind father"... "twinkle in soup"... "*Voyage Under The Table*"... "buy my new book"...

© *Rumpole Interviews™*.

NEW PROVERBS

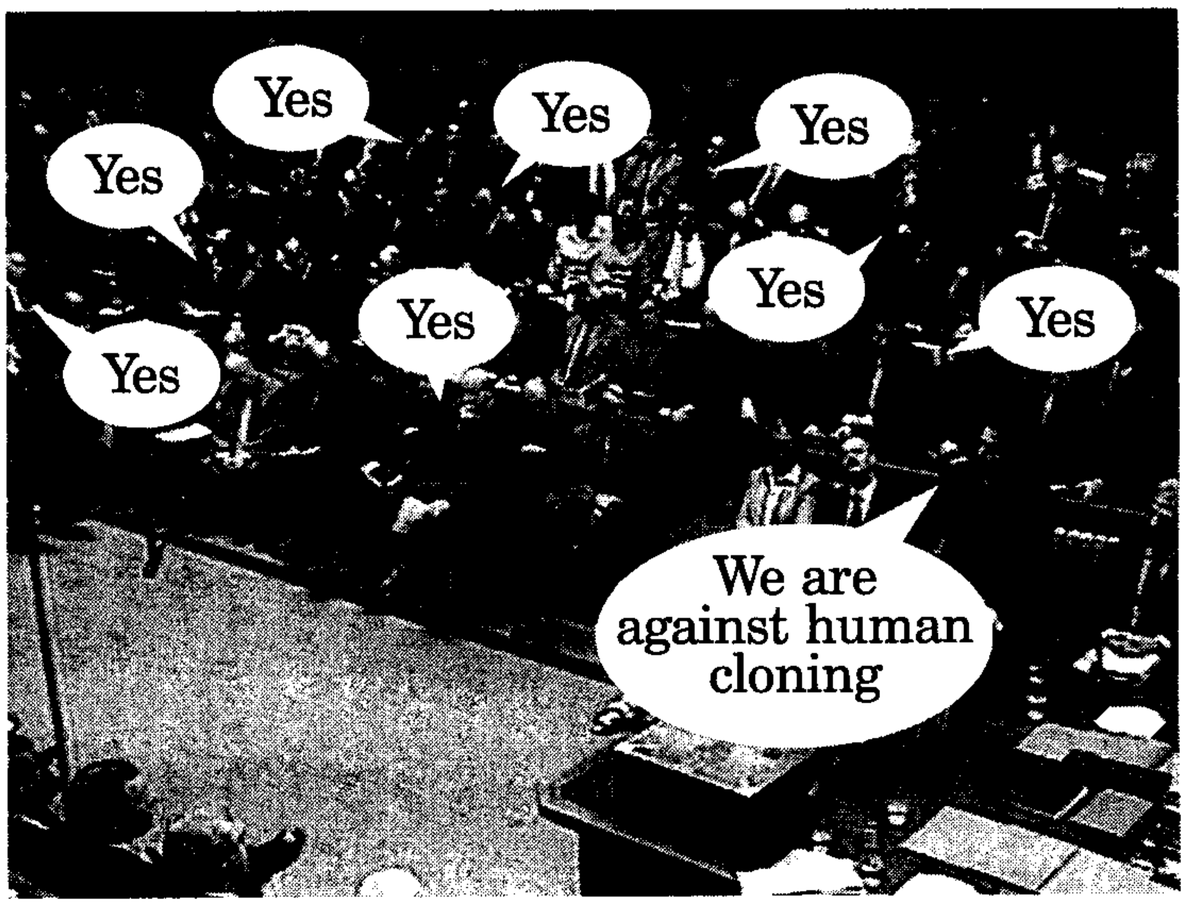
Exclusive To All Papers

SHOULD TONY BLAIR GET INVOLVED IN POLITICS?

THERE was much disquiet in political circles yesterday after Tony Blair, the husband of the first lady Cherie Blair, made a speech where he made a number of comments about the situation in Afghanistan.

"While we all agree that Tony is lovely to look at and that he always makes an effort to support Cherie in her work," said one political observer, "he really isn't qualified to speak on such complex and difficult matters, in the manner that a QC such as Cherie could.

"In future, Tony would be better advised to leave such complex world matters to his vastly more intelligent wife and just get on with whatever it is that he does."



Coming soon on Channel 4

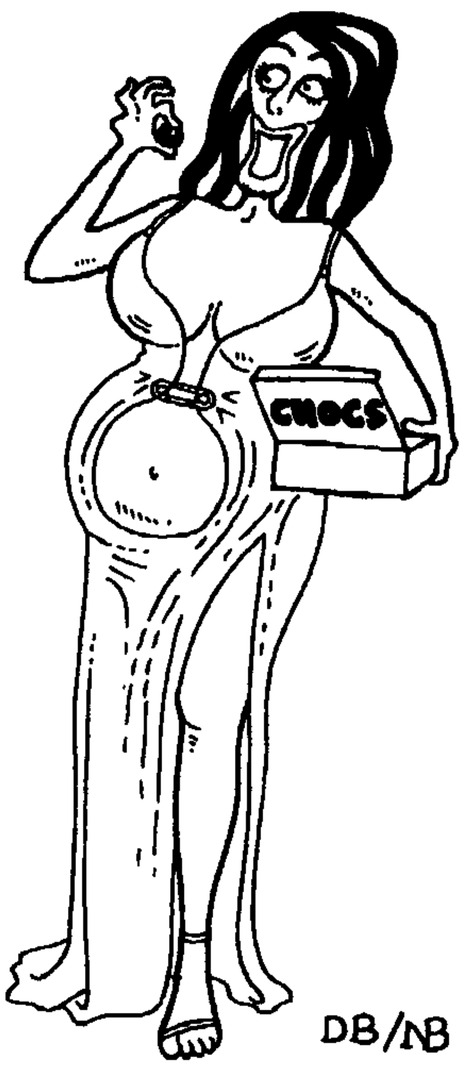
100 Best Spoons

YOU THE viewers vote on the world's top spoons from a list prepared by the British Spoon Institute (BSI). Will the overall spoon winner be the classic Citizen Spoon from Habitat or will it be the futuristic Star Spoon from Ikea? Graham Norton presides over this innuendo-packed festival of spoonery. "I've got a long one," he says, "and I'm going to dip it in a cup of tea."

The Ending of Life

A seminar organised by the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship. It will examine the law and ethics of withdrawing life-sustaining treatment, euthanasia and doctor-assisted suicide and the law of medical murder. The venue is Slaughter and May, *New Law Journal*

NEW OLD SAYINGS



The Hurley Bird Catches The Sperm

★ The Private Eye Annual for 2001. Now on sale – £8.99 hardback ★

What You Won't Read In The Sun

Sun

PHWOOAAAR!

SAUCY SURGEONS GET READY TO CUT THE CORRR-D AS MURDOCH MISSUS GETS IT OUT FOR THE LADS!!!!

GOGGLE-EYED surgeons couldn't believe their lucky stars when they glimpsed cheeky Asian Babe Wendy, 34, as she gave birth to a baby girl – COMPLETELY STARKERS!!! And your supa-soaraway current *bun-in-the-oven* was kept fully a-*breast* of developments throughout!!!

"There wasn't *womb* enough in the operating theatre when Wendy stripped off!!! There was certainly a *surge-on* in my trousers!!!"

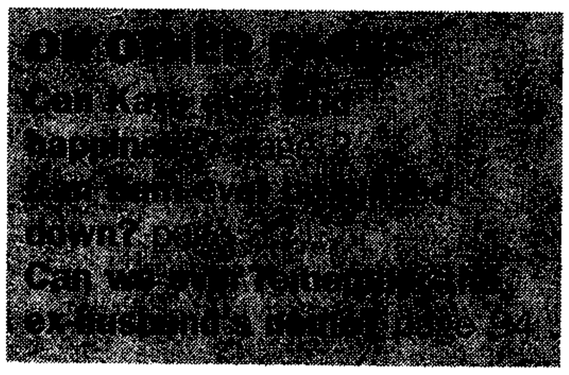
Stunna Baby Grace – just two days old – begins work on Monday in her new role as Chief Executive of News International's Far East operations. She's bound to be a tasty *satellite-dish*, eh fellahs?

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL PAPERS

Actress Sleeps With Producer

by Our Entire Staff

A FAMOUS actress yesterday revealed that she is sleeping with a famous producer, and not with the person she used to be sleeping with who isn't famous.



The New Man In Kate Winslet's Life

BY OUR SHOWBIZ STAFF
NONNY VENT

THE lovelorn star of Titanic and Enigma last night admitted that she was having a serious relationship with Charles Moore, the famous editor of the Daily Telegraph.

"He is besotted with me," says Kate, "and I am spending as much time in his newspaper as possible."

Moore, however, has a history of attachments to a string of glamorous girls, including Lady Victoria Hervey, Tara Palmer-Tomkinson and, of course, a long-running infatuation with Liz Hurley. Friends are worried that his current involvement with Ms Winslet will end in tears.

"Charles has a roving eye and likes to have beautiful women around his masthead. Kate had better watch out, as he could easily dump her next week and take up with someone from Cold Feet."

WHERE'S OZZIE? 3

Ozzie is still giving everyone the slip. Can YOU find him before the Americans start bombing Iraq?

APOLOGY

The Conduct Of The War

IN COMMON with all other newspapers employing military experts, we may in recent weeks have inadvertently given the impression that the Taliban military forces were comprised of fanatical, battle-hardened combat troops whose warrior ancestry and fighting prowess would ensure that the war against them would be long, bloody and ultimately unsuccessful. Headlines such as "Bombing Doesn't Work", "Why We Must Surrender Now" and "This War Is Nothing But Hot Blair" may have reinforced this misapprehension amongst our readers.

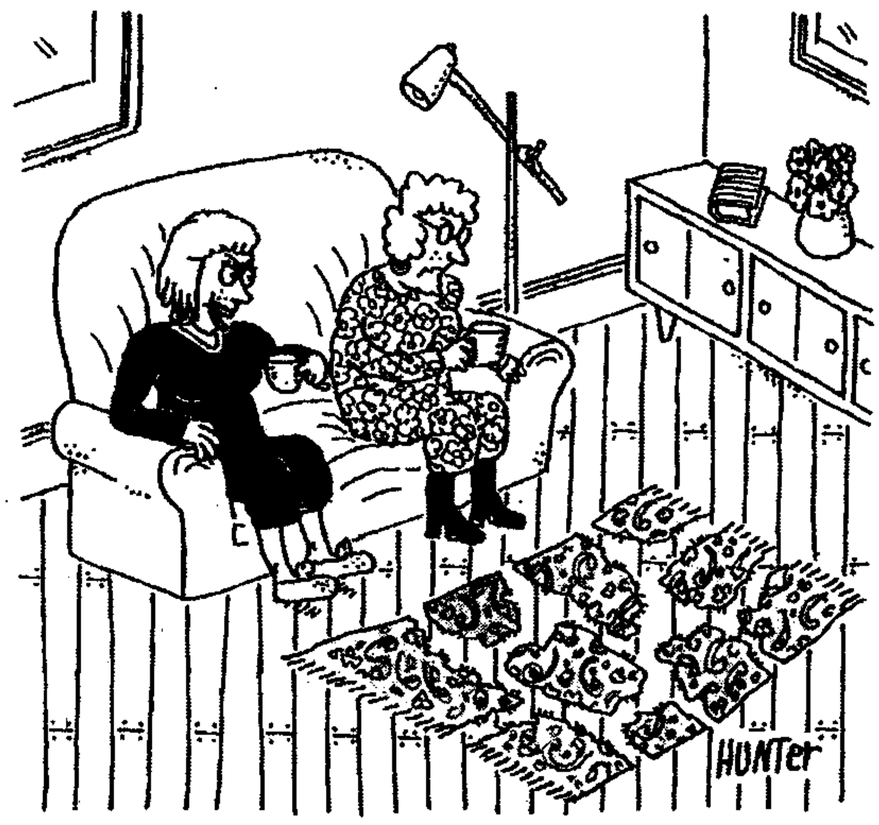
We now accept that far from being a dangerous army of suicidal maniacs, the Taliban are in fact an ill-disciplined, disorganised, gutless rabble, who scarper at the first sound of gunfire and then switch sides to try and save themselves.

Talking of which, we would like to congratulate the Prime Minister on his courageous handling of the war and have run a number of pieces in today's paper with headlines reflecting our consistent support for his conduct of a complex military situation, viz "Bombs Wahay!", "Why They Must Surrender Now" and "Yes! Winstony Blair Has Won The War".

We would like to apologise for any confusion caused by our earlier coverage.

© All newspapers.

"It's a genuine Afghan rug"



Your bombs tonight p. 17

KABUL TIMES

Price: 2 cigarettes

Get Your Poppy Now! Special Offer

Rival Warlords Battle It Out

by Our Man In London **Alf Ghanistan**

TWO cut-throat British warlords are fighting for supremacy in a ruthless battle for territory raging across Britain's newspapers.

Make no mistake! This is a fight to the death between merciless ruffians with no morals, little education and a contempt for civilised values. Of one thing you can be sure. In the end, only one of them will live to tell the tale.

Who Are They, The Barbaric Bandits Of Britain?

YELLAND, so-called Lord of the Sun, a terrifying, hairless brigand who has repeatedly savaged his rival Moron, whom he calls a traitor. His lieutenant is the zealot Littlejohn who hates all foreigners and wants them out of his country.

LESS than a mile away is the head-quarters of his sworn enemy Moron, a mercenary renowned for his love of easy money. His pay-master is the mysterious financier known only as Sir Victor Blank, who will pay any amount of money to keep Moron on his side in the battle to destroy the forces of Yelland once and for all.

Both of them hold women in contempt, making them wear no clothes at all when they appear in public and ***(That's enough Borelords. Ed.)***

Sun

War On Terrorism — Day 94

I SEE OUR LADS NOT GOING IN

By MICHAEL BURQA

TODAY I saw with my own eyes our proud British boys fearlessly sitting in the airport lounge not knowing what was going on.

Make no mistake, Britain can hold her head high today as these fine young men courageously drink coffee and smoke cigarettes while they wait for the Americans to decide what to do.

Typical of the spirit of our boys was this plucky Tommy who asked to remain anonymous (due to the fact that I've made him up). Private X told me, "It's an honour to be sitting here serving my country. Mr Blair has made it quite clear what our task is. To hang around until someone thinks what to do with us."

Great British Military Heroes No. 94

Simpson of Kabul

THE heroic deeds of Simpson of Kabul are known to every schoolboy in the land and have now passed into legend. Armed only with a microphone and dressed up as an Afghan woman, Simpson marched into Kabul and single-handedly captured the Taliban fortress without a shot being fired. According to the only eye witness (Jo Simpson), at the sight of the distinguished silver-haired Englishman, the entire Taliban army turned tail and ran.

Some left their weapons lying on the ground, some left meals half-eaten and opium pipes half-smoked. Others did not even have time to shave off their beards. They simply fled in blind terror at the sight of the man known only as The BBC's Global Editor.

Simpson's first words on entering the liberated city will be remembered as long as history is taught in British schools. "1, 2, 3... Testing, testing... Is this bloody camera working?"

© The Boys' Own Book of Bogus Adventures

"I'm sorry, we can take your mother's clothes, but not her"

http://www.enimiesreunited.co.uk/

Enemies Reunited – The One-Stop Site To Reunite

Do you know someone who's lost touch with a friend they can't stand over the years? Perhaps one of them got a different job and moved away? Perhaps one of them got the other one's job and moved next door? Well, why not bring them together using the internet.

Simply e-mail the press with a story about how much they loathe each other, and soon they'll be together, laughing and joking, smiling and hugging, and trying not to spit in each other's faces.

KNACKER TO IGNORE 'WEEKEND CRIME'

by Our Home Affairs Staff **M.T. Jails**

INSPECTOR Knacker of the Yard today revealed his new plan to turn a blind eye to crimes committed at the weekend.

Said the Inspector, "Frankly, we have higher priorities than going around arresting people for minor offences perpetrated by ordinary members of the public in their leisure time.

"That is why we will not be wasting our time and resources on trivial matters such as burglary, mugging, homicide, rape and GBH."

Crack Up

The Inspector continued, "We consider there are more urgent matters requiring our attention, such as hanging around the station smoking joints."

Inspector Knacker is stoned.

"So he's still got the projectile vomiting then?"

CAKES' HEAD LASHES OUT AT 'LEAGUE TABLE FARCE'

by Educational Staff **Conrad Blackboard**

THE HEADMASTER of the prestigious independent school St Cakes (Motto: 'Who Pays Gets In') hit out yesterday at the latest academic league tables which show his school to be the bottom of the list for the fourth year running.

Said Mr Kipling, "These tables give no indication of the overall quality of a school. They just centre on things like education and ignore all the other things that a school is doing, like collecting fees and renting out the facilities for conferences in the holidays."

He continued, "If you would like to know more about our leisure facilities, which now include an 18-hole golf course, you can visit our website at www.stcakes.co.uk where full details are available."

League Tables In Full pages 12-58

MIDLANDS

		GCSE PASS RATE
375	**St Botolphs, Handsworth** Ind. RC Grant-maintained (425 pupils)	7%
376	**Bogstandard Comprehensive, Solihull** Comp. Co-ed (37,304 pupils)	6%
377	**The Taliban School For Girls, Aston** Ind. Islamic (0 pupils)	3%
378	**St Cakes School (off the M73)** Ind. Co-ed (743 pupils)	0%

ROY of the RIP-OFFS

DYKE THREATENS HIMSELF WITH SACK

by Our BBC Staff **Roland Rat**

THE Director General of the BBC, Greg Dyke, has issued himself with a stern warning that if he causes himself and the corporation further embarrassment and bad publicity, he could face the sack.

A BBC spokesman said, "Mr Dyke can't afford to have outspoken Director Generals going around shooting their mouths off and making idiots of themselves by criticising BBC staff. He's decided that enough is enough, and that if this happens again, he should show himself the door."

From the pen that gave you "Never Too Old", a new saga

Heirs and Graces

by Dame Sylvie Krin

THE STORY SO FAR: The beautiful flower of the Orient, Wendy Deng, has married billionaire media mogul Rupert Murdoch. Now she is about to present him with another heir...

"PUSH! Harder! Come on, you can do it! Just one more push! You're nearly there!" Rupert tried desperately to raise his ageing frame an inch from the floor, under the stern gaze of his personal trainer, the former world Kung Fu Champion Mr Givima Kikin.

The octogenarian press baron felt the sweat forming on his wrinkled brow as he struggled to obey Mr Kikin's commands.

"Ten more press-ups, now, or Miss Wendy say you have no breakfast, fat guy!"

"Jeez! Give us a break, ya yellow bastard," panted the owner of the Times of London and 417 other international titles. "I'm fair pooped!"

He collapsed onto the exercise mat in the purpose-built gymnasium on the 37th floor of his Manhattan love-nest.

"I feel as knackered as a wallaby's donger in the mating season," he wheezed and he was saved from further exertion by the urgent ringing of his mobile phone with its personalised ring tone of Rolf Harris's "Two Little Boys". The screen flashed up the number of the Graydon Carter Maternity Clinic in fashionable downtown Long Island.

"Mr Murdoch?" purred the silken voice of Dr Hackenbush, New York's leading gynaecologist. "I think you should come over at once."

"THEY told me to come over at once," Rupert explained to the pretty young receptionist who greeted him at the clinic's welcome area.

"You must be the proud grandfather," she beamed, extending a cordial hand. "You haven't seen the father anywhere, have you? We did ring, but we haven't seen him."

Thrusting her aside with his huge bouquet of purple magnesias mixed with yellow nigellas, which his chauffeur had purchased at the service station on the way over, the world's most powerful press magnate strode purposefully towards the lift.

"Take me to the maternity ward!" he snapped at the bell-boy, pressing a ten cent coin into the black youth's open palm.

"And don't spend it all at once," he added. "I worked bloody hard for that."

"Thank you, Sah," came back the reply from the grateful lift attendant. "You must be the proud grandfather."

The lift door opened and he was met by the matron, a buxom middle-aged hispanic lady in a starched uniform and an identity badge which stated 'Sister Cavaleria Rusticana – sponsored by McDonald's'.

"Congratulaziones, señor! You are the happy grandfather, no?"

"No, I am *bloody* not!" yelled the indignant entrepreneur. "Do I look like a bloody chinaman?" The matron shrugged. "Just bring the flowers anyway. I get you a nice glass of water and find you somewhere to sit until the husband comes."

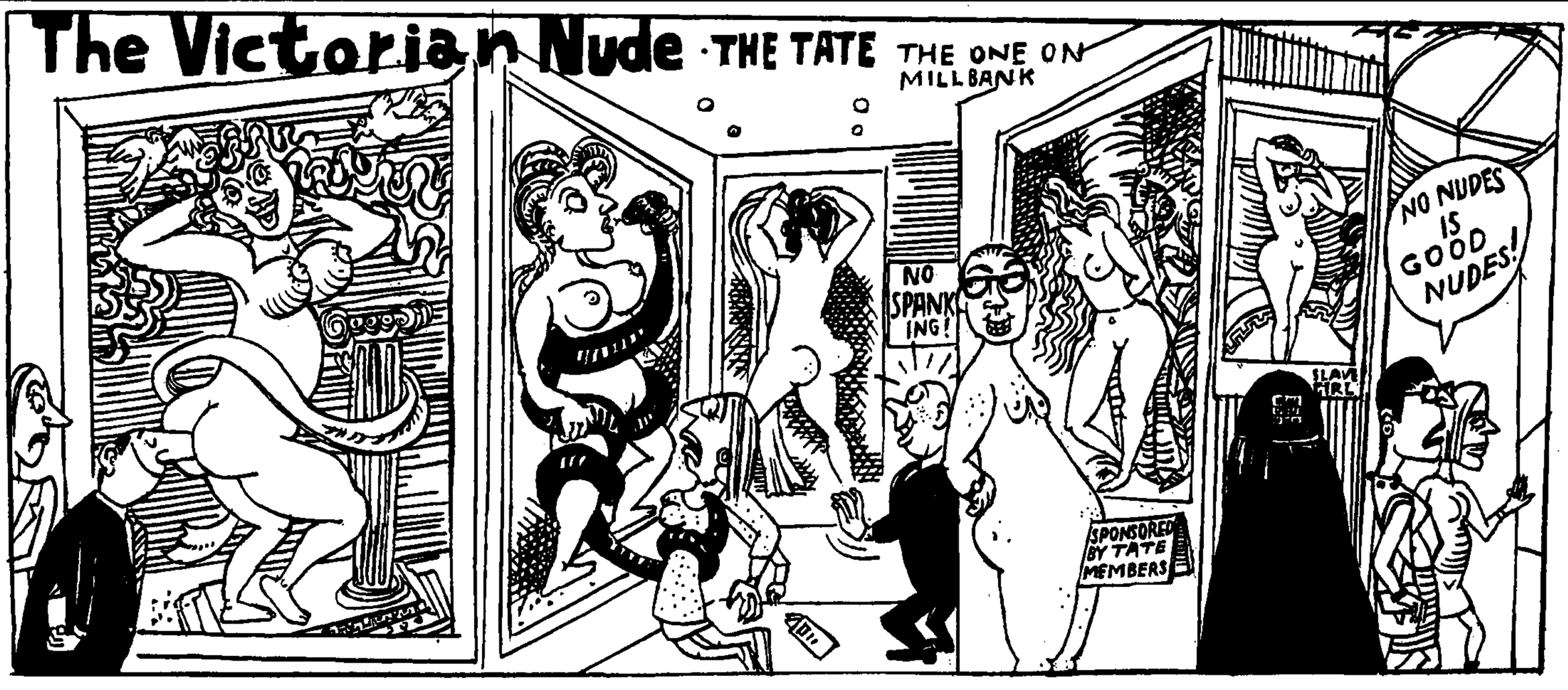
Rupert's eyes bulged with rage and his walnut-veined cheeks suffused with anger.

"I am the bloody husband! If anyone else calls me the grandfather again, I'll buy this clinic and close it down!"

"LUPERT! So good to see you?" The third Mrs Murdoch raised her head from the pillow. In her arms she cradled the tiny helpless heir to the Murdoch dynasty. "She's a great little Sheila and no mistake," Rupert announced proudly as he gazed tenderly into the baby's eyes. "She's only a little thing. How much was she? About six pounds?"

"No," his wife replied knowingly, as a smile played across her perfectly formed cherry blossom lips. "More like six billion!"

As she spoke, the matron pulled back the blind and golden sunlight filled the room with its rich splendour. *(To be continued)*



ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

NO. 94 MICK JAGGER

How do you personally relate to spoons?

Well I've got a bohemian attitude to spoons. I take the ones I want and leave the ones I don't.

What type of spoon most appeals to you?

New spoons, I suppose, now you ask me. After a few years you get bored with a spoon. You wake up in the morning and you look at your old spoon and you say to yourself "Mick, it's time to get yourself a new spoon". And you do.

So how many spoons do you think you've had?

I can't keep count of them. They're just too many.

Can I ask you about your new album?

Of course you can. It's the only reason I've agreed to do this interview.

Do spoons play any part in the album?

No, but it's a solo album called "Goddess in the Doorway" and it's the best thing I've ever done.

Why do you think it's only sold 7 copies and is currently at number 994 in the charts?

Er... can we get back to the spoons?

Who will you leave your spoons to when you die?

Well I've got so many children that they can sort it out. When you're gone, you're gone.

Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

No.

NEXT WEEK: Lord Hattersley – "Me and My Paper Clips".

GOVERNMENT REASSURES PROTESTORS OVER HEATHROW FIFTH TERMINAL

by Our Aviation Staff **Tony Air**

THE GOVERNMENT moved swiftly last night to allay fears that the proposed new terminal at Heathrow would cause unacceptable damage to the environment.

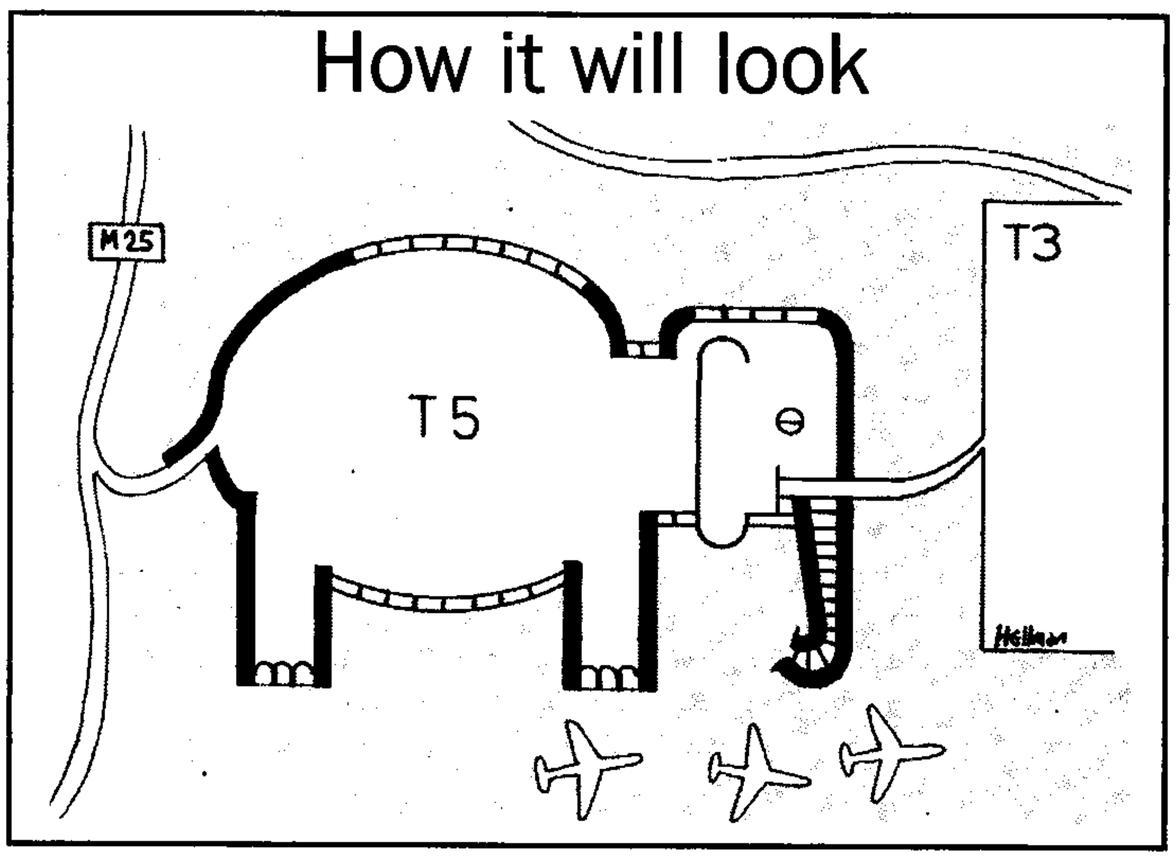
Protestors have long argued that a new terminal would create problems with greatly increased air pollution, noise pollution and road traffic congestion.

"All these fears are unfounded," said Stephen Byers, speaking for the government. "I can assure you that since no one wants to fly anywhere any more, this is going to be the cleanest and quietest terminal in the world."

No Byers

He continued, "By the time we have completed this massive programme, nearly all flights will have been cancelled and most airlines will have gone bankrupt.

"This represents a perfect opportunity to build a state-of-the-art airport terminal that will remain empty well into the twenty-first century."



IRVINE PROTEST AT ADDICTION REVELATIONS

by Our Drugs Staff **L.S.D. Lowry**

THE son of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine of Lairg, has complained to the Press Council over stories appearing in the press about his father's so-called drink problem.

Lord Irvine of Glug

Lord Irvine was pictured in the News of the World falling out of the Garrick Club in the early hours of the afternoon with an accompanying story alleging that the Garrick was a notorious "Booze Den" where addicts could buy "hard liquor" at knock-down prices.

Said the Honourable Alastair Irvine, "Why can't the press leave my father alone? His alcohol addiction is his own problem and it is not in the public interest for details of his claret consumption to be splashed all over the tabloids. They should respect our privacy."

Drunk as a Lord Chancellor

Lord Irvine has apparently made many attempts to come off the booze, some of them lasting for as long as two or three days according to his son.

"He should be allowed to clean up his act in his own time without the press breathing down his neck. His employer, Mr Blair, has been very understanding and done nothing at all about the situation."

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam
Rosemary Brown, Medium to the Great Composers

So. Farewell
Then.
Rosemary Brown.

You are the
Famous Balham
Housewife
Who wrote down
Music dictated
To her
By Bach, Beethoven,
Liszt and
Many others.

You also saw Bertrand
Russell in the
Supermarket.

I have just
Seen you in
My bedroom
Telling me
To write this
Poem.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

"One day, son, all this will be your ex-wife's"

DIARY

BEDTIME WITH PILGER

"And I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll BLOW YOUR HOUSE DOWN!"

I was reading a chilling bedtime story to the children. Like me, they had been shocked by the fascist-imperialist territorial claims by the 3 Not-So-Very-Little Pigs on the impoverished wolf's home. And like me, they could see through the evasions and lies of West propaganda to the truth of the merciless persecution of the wolf community over the past fifty years.

"Again and again, ceaselessly and without remorse," I interrupted the story to explain, "the West has attempted to blacken the name of the wolf community through vicious fairy-tales aimed at targeting susceptible toddlers.

"But the public is not so easily fooled. Wolves have been killed in their beds, had their heads chopped off by CIA agents posing as woodcutters, and brutally destroyed through mass genocide on the say-so of the Bush Family and its handmaiden Blair. According to one estimate, over ten million wolves have been slaughtered in a bloodbath to which our multinational-dominated media is only too keen to turn a blind eye. Imagine it: ten million wolves. Baby wolf. Mummy Wolf. Auntie Wolf. All silently murdered in a pitless array of so-called fairy tales".

I then paused, wiped away my tears, and looked deep into the children's innocent eyes.

"No Paul McCartney concert for them," I choked. That's the truth they never tell us.

I did not kiss them goodnight. I couldn't. My god, can't you see, this is no time for goodnight kisses. Also, I would have been physically incapable of delivering a kiss to their cheeks. Ever since the start of the murderous campaign by Anglo-American imperial forces following the unfortunate collapse of the World Trade and Arms-Dealing Center (the true story of its faulty brickwork has yet to be told: what they don't tell us is that it would have fallen down anyway – and that, let me assure you, is a matter of record) I have been wearing a burqa. This is in solidarity with the literally millions of middle-eastern women who are being forced to live under the heel of the Bush-Blair mass-murdering axis.

As the world-renowned Professor David V. Spart of the University of Oxbridge makes horribly clear in his recent groundbreaking article in the New Left Review of Semiotic Studies in Neo-Fascist Imperialism, not until the "liberals" and other crypto-fascist lickspittles of the Murdoch-owned Western media conglomerates are forced to put on their burqas will they be able to comprehend the devastating record of Western oppression of the weak and the hungry. I have thus decided that all children entering the Pilger household will henceforth wear burqas. So too will our hamster – an Iraqi refugee from the Western oppression that is decimating his or her country – and our four goldfish, who, contrary to Western propaganda, actually enjoy wearing their burqas, as they allow them at last to have a good rest, away from prying eyes, lying completely still at the bottom of their bowls, peaceful at last.

FACT: According to one estimate, a recent poll suggests that up to 96.4% of ordinary, decent Britons are against the Anglo-American invasion of Afghanistan. Asked, "Do you approve of the way the Dictator Blair is covertly splattering Afghani mothers with the blood of their new-born babes before slitting the throats of their midwives?" up to 99% of Britons in one household replied with a whole-hearted "No". This is the truth our so-called "government" never tells us.

Inevitably, blood-stained government stooges in the BBC have talked about the so-called "oppression" of women having to wear a burqa. But think of the far more hideous oppression of women and girls – some of them still not in their teens, for pity's sake – having to wear "lipstick", "stillettoes" "brassieres" and painfully short skirts for the delectation of male subliminal rapists in the so-called "civilised" Western world. That's the truth they never tell us.

Far from being an in any way "oppressive regime" – a rumour viciously disseminated by the neo-Nazi Bush family's ruthless CIA organisation – the Taliban were the best thing that had happened to Afghanistan in a very long time. With the help of passionate if headstrong idealist Osama bin Laden, more young men than ever before have gained top-level qualifications in aviation, nuclear physics and self-defence, and Osama and his dedicated band of aid-workers are continuing to explore possibility of gracious cave-dwelling for the homeless and dispossessed.

FACT: According to a major new study, US scientists are currently exploring ways of making motor vehicles run on fuel based on 77% extract from the livers of human corpses. Small wonder, then, that Bush and Blair wish to increase worldwide slaughter to meet consumer demands. So next time you drive your car to your local "super" market, just remember: that tank of yours may be filled with the blood of innocent Afghani toddlers.

"My, Granny – what big EYES you've got!"

I continue reading bedtime stories to the children. Don't tell me they don't have as much right as anyone to know what really happened in the wood on the fateful day when the highly-trained undercover CIA operative codenamed Little Red Riding Hood connived in the brutal slaughter of yet another innocent underfed wolf as he went about his everyday business. Of course, the Western anti-wolf propaganda machine swung into operation and put it about that if the wolf didn't want to be mistaken for a grandmother he shouldn't have worn a burqa in bed. But hang on. Did I hear someone mention that old-fashioned word, "Freedom"?

A dead wolf, slaughtered in his bed: And all for what? The triumph of Western civilisation.

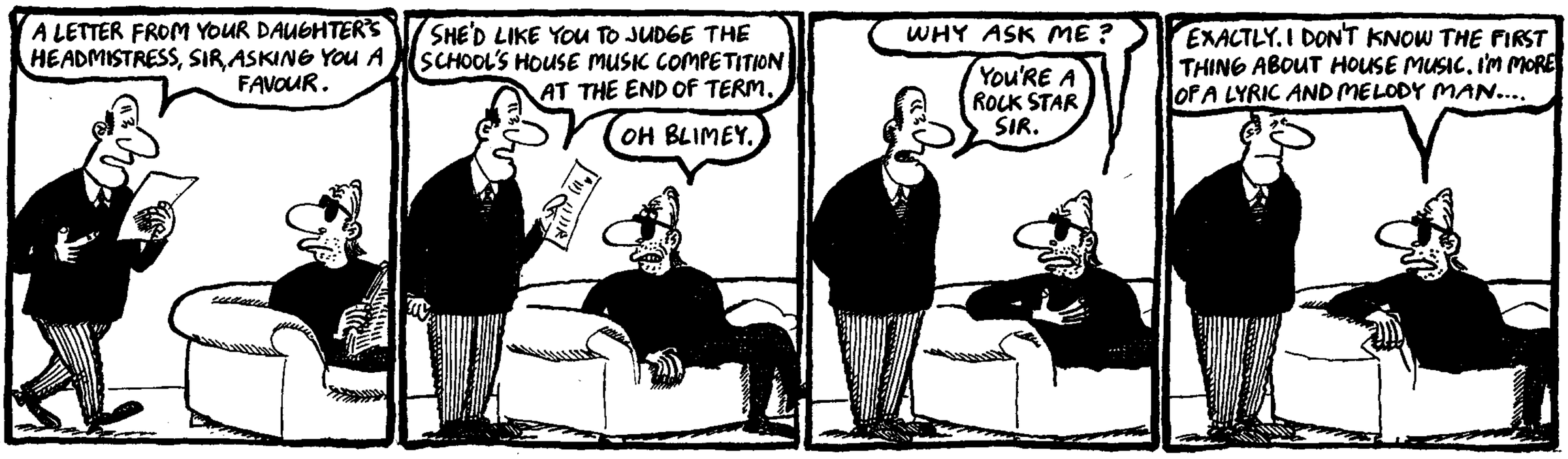
Tell that to the wolf's grieving kiddies.

As told to

CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER


A LETTER FROM YOUR DAUGHTER'S HEADMISTRESS, SIR, ASKING YOU A FAVOUR.
SHE'D LIKE YOU TO JUDGE THE SCHOOL'S HOUSE MUSIC COMPETITION AT THE END OF TERM.
OH BLIMEY.
WHY ASK ME?
YOU'RE A ROCK STAR SIR.
EXACTLY. I DON'T KNOW THE FIRST THING ABOUT HOUSE MUSIC. I'M MORE OF A LYRIC AND MELODY MAN....

Literary Review

Soap Opus

The Corrections
Jonathan Franzen
(Fourth Estate, £17.99)

AMERICA'S current number one bestselling novelist and winner of this year's National Book Award, Jonathan Franzen, is also developing a reputation for what our US cousins call hissy fits. Ten years ago, after publishing two neat but neglected novels, Franzen went into a sulk because one of the books had been reviewed in the Crime & Mystery section of the *New York Times*. The writer objected that, while the novel had "thriller elements", he was not a "genre writer".

In 1996 he wrote a magazine piece bleating that the serious novel was dead. This fall, having received have-my-babies reviews for his third book, *The Corrections*, and reached the top of the bestseller lists, he balked at an invitation to appear on Oprah Winfrey's monthly Book Club, an exercise in televisual literary populism which has made Oprah the patron saint of literacy in the States. Franzen objected that his book was "High Art" while the Winfrey show usually promoted schlock.

Salman Rushdie can relax and pack his tux away. Finally, after 20 years, he won't be needed at the awards dinner for Literary Big-Head Of The Year this time round.

So is Franzen correct about *The Corrections*? What he's written is a *Bonfire Of The Vanities* for the 21st century but with the vital and culturally sensitive twist that his characters are not the "masters of the universe" like Sherman McCoy but just plain folks. Enid and Alfred Lambert are a well-heeled couple in the mid-west.

Pop's got Parkinson's and is losing his mind and so Mom tries to round up their three kids for a final family celebration. The kids, though, are on the East Coast, dabbling in various iconic professions: academe, screen-writing, fund-management, post-Soviet political reconstruction.

What Franzen gives us is a tense and compelling family saga with sexual and financial complications — in the 19th century, this would have been called The Lamberts — but, as an honor student who knows his post-modernism, he adds a patina of literary seriousness. Basically, the old folks represent traditional middle America, struggling to understand the ways of the freaks on the eastern seaboard.

Brand-names are coyly diguised in the Victorian manner: D- - - College, G- - - Electric. These flourishes are supposed to establish *The Corrections* as High Art. But the ultimate division between the serious novel and the airport best-seller is the extent to which they tolerate cliché. And, in Franzen, second-hand phrases fall on the pages in an almost Ken Follett torrent. In the same sequence, one character "took up the cudgels" but is then "cut to the quick". Despite this, he "grinned and bore it". The prevalence of such prose can't be forgiven merely because the writer occasionally throws in a word such as "counterexamples".

Because Chip Lambert at one point teaches cultural studies, the book is intermittently concerned with literary criticism. One theory of reading which Franzen's character doesn't mention is the belief that all books contain a piece of self-criticism buried within them: a moment when the writer betrays his hopes and fears about what he's doing.

There's a blue-chip giveaway in *The Corrections*. Asking his class to deconstruct a Benetton-like advertising campaign, Chip is dismayed that they're taken in by it but finally unsurprised: "The slick production values... could seduce first-year students before they'd acquired the critical tools of resistance and analysis."

An author almost supernaturally aware of his effects and image, Franzen reveals in that paragraph his fears about what he's writing. Is he producing a novel with slick production values which will take in novel-buying sophomores that it's really something more profound?

He's right to worry. In the end *The Corrections* is as fascinating a psychological document as a literary one. Franzen has become rich and famous through realising a crucial truth about contemporary culture: that its dominant and most lucrative form is soap opera. He's written a stonking one.

And yet, having found the key to American literary success in the 21st century, Franzen, a college-educated snob, can't live with the knowledge that he did it. He has to pretend that he got through the door by some either means, by passing under the High Art arch or tapping in the po-mo codes that remain a secret from most readers. That's BS, as they say over there. *The Corrections* deserves to out-sell any soap produced by the Body Shop this Christmas, but soap is what it is.

Books & Bookmen

■ AMID the fuss surrounding HarperCollins' recent bunch of sackings — announced on the day that CEO Victoria Barnsley flew to New York on Concorde at a cost of £7,000 — the company's sustained push to inflate its profits at the expense of the Tolkien audience has gone unreported.

Peter Weir's long-awaited film of *The Fellowship Of The Ring* opens shortly before Christmas. As you might expect, HarperCollins (which bought Tolkien's old publisher Allen & Unwin in the sole aim of acquiring his backlist) has been repackaging away — and briskly upping its prices. The illustrated version *Lord Of The Rings* — illustrated by the Tolkien artist Alan Lee — now weighs in at £45, while even the bulk-standard hardback is a wallet-lightening £29.99.

Down at the lower end of the market, anyone who fancies buying their offspring the single-volume paperback will find themselves paying a quite indefensible £14.99. The larger paperback version of *The Hobbit*, a bare 270 pages long, has been marked up to £7.99. Along with the dense smoke of the warring armies rising over Middle Earth one can also smell something else: the scent of profiteering.

■ *WITH 49 job losses announced at Penguin, it is telling that of the three to go from Penguin Press editorial, all had been personal protegés of erstwhile MD and keen angler Andrew Rosenheim (see last* Eye*).*

First there was the double act of Marcus Clapham and Clive Reynard, drafted in from cheapo publisher Wordsworth Editions to revive the moribund non-fiction backlist but who failed to set the world alight when it became clear that they were churning out the same old stuff, only in slightly different covers.

Then there was Classics editor Margaret Bartley — a rare female appointee for Rosenheim — who lasted just over a year. Others who owe their positions to the great fisherman, and exulted in the back-slapping boysie atmosphere created by him among certain senior staff, must now be fearing the dawn knock and the arrival of the P45.

■ **A FINE example of this relentlessly macho atmosphere came at a dinner to mark the publication of the second volume of Paddy Ashdown's diaries.**

Rosenheim was thanked fulsomely by the author, as was his editor, Stuart Proffitt. Not a word of thanks was forthcoming, however, to publicist Nikki Barrow, who had spent the previous few weeks organising and generally nurse-maiding Pantsdown on his tour of the nation's bookshops. And he's supposed to have a way with the ladies...

■ *A CURIOUSLY-worded statement from Little, Brown explains that it will not now be publishing Michael Bloch's biography of Jeremy Thorpe in the new year, the subject having now seen the manuscript and "indicated that he would not welcome its publication at the present time".*

Most intriguing is the final line of the statement. "In view of his current state of health Mr Bloch and Little, Brown have decided to postpone publication," it says. What constitutes "the present time"? Is this a cryptic way of saying the publisher has reverted to the original plan of waiting until Thorpe is dead before publishing, and an even more cryptic way of hinting that such an event is not expected to be long in coming? Time will tell.

■ WITH its parent company, reinsurance specialist Swiss Re, facing costs of at least $750m as its part of the World Trade Center payout, the future is looking gloomy indeed for business publisher Texere (see *Eyes passim*).

The original plan was to provide Texere's founder Myles Thompson with $10m over three years, but he managed to blow the lot in the company's first 12 months. Swiss Re is now providing the company with huge loans which the publisher is in no position to pay back.

The first sign that all was not well came when Thompson's co-founder Martin Liu walked out after barely a year. Given that Texere had been founded through a buyout of Orion's business books division, which had been built up steadily by Liu, the exit was a significant one.

Since then, there have been countless expensive bungles, not least printing the wrong author picture on a very high-profile title — on the cover of *Adventures of an Economist*, Nobel prize winner Franco Modigliani was transformed into management consultant Peter Drucker. This resulted in the run having to be reprinted.

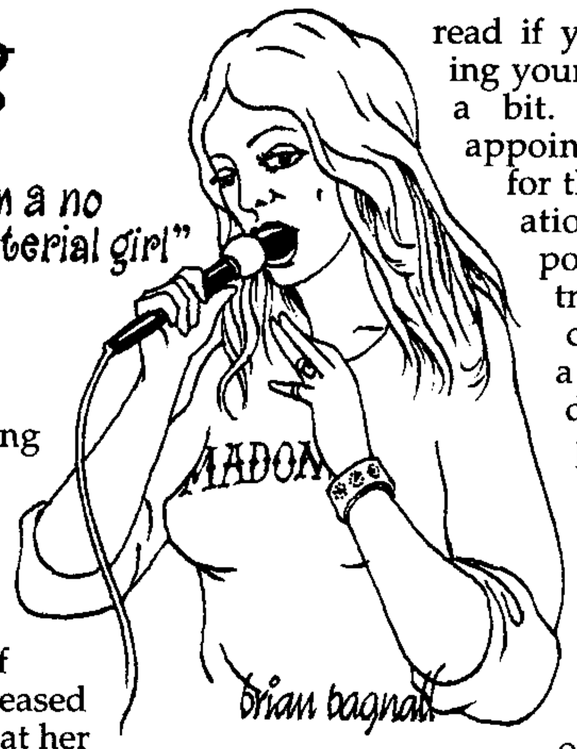
'Bookworm'

Desperately Seeking Something

Madonna
Andrew Morton
(Michael O'Mara, £18)

Morton's latest dirge, *Madonna*, is a romantic novel masquerading as a biography. With countless newspaper serialisations and the most fortuitously timed royal death in the history of publishing behind him, any celebrity bum-chum knows that the phonecall from Morton is akin to Judas's 30 pieces of silver.

Because none of Madonna's current friends would have any truck with such a familiar parasite, the resultant biog is several eye-openers short of a bombshell. All that remains are several clunking rent-a-quotes from luminaries such as Vanilla Ice, one of the most lamentable and universally derided pop performers of all time. To gasps, Ice reveals that once Madonna got a stain on the kid-leather interior of his new Porsche with her fake tan. Other astonishing scoops (only available on the internet before now) include a list of her well-known beaux, her two marriages, the names of the records she's released and the jawdropper that her public pronouncements are under no circumstances to be trusted.



Which is very convenient for Morton, as Madonna declined to speak to him. He argues most persuasively that an interview wouldn't have helped a bit in the search for her essence.

Ironically, this lack of anything approaching new facts makes *Madonna* a genuine pleasure to read if you like watching your authors sweat a bit. Morton, self-appointed Plutarch for the Pepsi generation, flits from portentous half-truth to flagrant conjecture like a moth in a disco. Then she plumps for the traditional biographer's sidestep, concluding that Madonna is "a consummate mistress of disguise" and that even after all his hard work we'll never pin down such a cultural chimera. Or as Vanilla Ice so effortlessly frames it: "If she were a painting, she would be an abstract by Picasso. She has so many faces." Right on, bro.

But forgetting the subject matter, which is easily accomplished, beneath the sudsy gush ("The all-American girl was about to follow her destiny") are some intriguing pointers to Morton's modus operandi. His themes as to what drives the people's princess mk II run something like her good fortune, her clashes with her father, her willingness to make sacrifices, her propensity for taking risks, her burning ambition, her constant need to express herself and her lack of self-esteem. Compare these to some of her work: *Lucky Star*, *Papa Don't Preach*, *A Certain Sacrifice*, *Gambler*, the *Blonde Ambition* tour, *Express Yourself* and *Who's That Girl?* It would appear that, in among the low-grade psychobabble and speculative flimflam, the heart of Morton's painstakingly well-paid research has been to read the track listing on a greatest hits album and swap some words around.

How on earth does he get away with it? Find out in the forthcoming big-screen smash about his struggle to write *Diana: Her True Story*. It's called *The Biographer*, it went into production earlier this year and this is not a joke.

WHAT YOU DIDN'T MISS, Pt 94

Critical Times: The History of the Times Literary Supplement
Derwent May
(HarperCollins, £25)

. . .It was in 1953, during the editorship of the dynamic Sylvester Dull, fresh from his forty year apprenticeship in the sub-editor's room of the *Times* (where he once shocked staider colleagues by maintaining that "bunkum" was in fact spelled "buncombe") that the *TLS* renewed its reputation for academic controversy. The occasion was a notice of Dame Venetia Starborgling's Parisian artworld memoir, *Hello Dali*, in which the reviewer, later identified as Professor Silas Grudge, alleged that Dame Venetia's use of contemporary sources was "not perhaps as altogether thorough-going as the more exigent of her readers might wish". The lively correspondence which ensued, lasting for the next eleven years, was finally brought to a close by Dull's successor.

These, posterity will confirm, were great days for the paper. Circulation rose to as many as 17 copies a week, while a host of eminent critics — among them S.Q. Littlebore, Professor Hugh Hee and the great American Byron scholar Homer X. Partingdean — were enticed into its increasingly crowded pages. Dull's status as the most celebrated literary journalist of his day was now widely acknowledged. A reserved, austere man, who kept a brace of shotguns in the editorial sanctum — one of these was turned on a subordinate in an argument over the latter's imperfect use of the subjunctive — he nevertheless entertained a series of distinguished literary visitors to his country home in Sussex. Indeed, the inadequate plumbing arrangements of this rural retreat were responsible for a celebrated witticism by T.S. Eliot, who remarked to Virginia Woolf that he felt "quite drained" after a weekend visit.

By the mid 1980s, however, it was clear that a transfusion of new blood was needed. Fortunately help was at hand in the figure of St Rupert of Wapping who, arriving adventitiously on his white charger, slew several hundred print workers at the gates of Pennington Street, burned their bodies on a mighty pyre and inaugurated a golden age in the paper's history, for which all lovers of literature will be grateful (*Will this do?* – DM) Another notable controversy of the period, threatening even to overshadow this largesse, came in the publication of Professor Barbara Scarborough's now notorious thesis on Browning's use of the semi-colon… (*continues for thousands of pages*)

Pseuds Corner

NoW: Are you lonely now?
Jackson: Of course. It's part of what I have to go through to be the artist that I am. I have to paint with a palette of different emotions.

MICHAEL JACKSON
News of the World

Charlie Parker – heroin addict, ne'er-do-well and saxophonist extraordinary. Charlie Parker broke the rules. He changed the game. He showed that successful music could be about passion, about stretching the boundaries, about daring to believe.

He made any number of mistakes. Twice he tried to kill himself. He was often so broke he had to pawn his saxophone. But he is remembered as someone who made a difference.

I was reminded of Charlie Parker at this week's British Urban Regeneration Association awards.

JULIAN DOBSON,
new start magazine

Following prolonged accident-consequent chronic fatigue effects on the authorship function, our updated publications schedule and list of outstanding orders is as follows...

Explanation for non-delivery of book ordered from Applied Management Research Ltd

CREWE-READ. – On October 21st, in London, to EMMA (nee Garton) and DAVID, a son. Sacha John-Randulph Offley, a brother for Honey-Bee and half brother for Caspian, Daniel and Gabriella. Direct descendant of Henry de Criwa c.1150 and Lord Crewe of Crewe.

Daily Telegraph

The sumptuously gifted Argentine midfielder, whom Eriksson initially brought from Boca juniors to Sampdoria at the age of 21 and later took to Lazio, where together they were to celebrate the Italian championship, is usually known as "Juan Sebastian Veron". Why the full title? It could, I suppose, be because he is regarded as the Bach of football – Johann Sebastian did, after all, have quite a range too…

PATRICK BARCLAY
Daily Telegraph

It is a beautifully written book and Bowden and Tabor share with Jane Austen and Tolstoy the ability to encapsulate their thoughts through elegant and enticing opening sentences. For instance Chapter 1 on 'Areas of contact between solids' opens, 'It is a very difficult matter to prepare surfaces which are really flat.' Chapter 4 on 'Friction of metals' introduces us to the fact that 'the methods used to measure friction vary widely.' The mechanism of metallic friction in Chapter 5 is introduced by 'It is clear that during sliding, metallic junctions, large compared with molecular dimensions, are formed and sheared.' Writing like this, and textbooks based on the authors' original research, are found all too rarely these days

STEPHEN KUKUREKA
review of reissue of F.P. Bowden and D. Tabor's *The Friction and Lubrication of Solids* in *Materials World*

Pseuds Corporate

We can remain customer focused and goal-directed, innovate and be an inside-out organisation which facilitates sticky-web readiness transforming turnkey eyeballs to brand 24/365 paradigms with benchmark turnkey channels implementing viral e-services and dot-com action-items while we take that action item off-line and raise a red flag and remember touch base as you think about red tape outside of the box and seize B2B e-tailers and re-envisioneer innovative partnerships that evolve dot-com initatives delivering synergistic earballs to incentivize.

Intsys UK promotes its services at www.anadrom.net

CONTRIBUTORS: Jim Loughran,Strobes, Rachel Bagenal, Caroline Adams, Eugene Weber, Jonny Stringer, Philip Howells.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

PRIVATISATION ON PARADE

ALMOST every day comes more news of the unravelling of the government's much-vaunted private finance initiative (PFI) projects.

As reported in the *Eye* two issues ago, the part-privatisation of air traffic control started in disaster and grew steadily worse. As a routine measure the employers at the new service, NATS, blandly announce that their £20m a year contributions to the pension fund will be cut off from next year. Since the fund was scrupulously kept in surplus under beastly old public enterprise, the employers are perfectly entitled to stop paying contributions, though employees of course must keep paying as before.

At the same time the consortia, said to be bidding for a newly-privatised London Underground, are rapidly seeking to withdraw from the whole business. Chancellor Gordon Brown, who has made tube privatisation his pet project, is trying to persuade or bribe the consortia to maintain the momentum to privatisation, and adamantly refuses even to meet the London transport commissioner Bob Kiley. Can anything else go wrong with Labour privatisations? Certainly…

Bob Kiley

● It's farewell (or PUK off, anyway) to Adrian Montague, who is resigning from Partnerships UK (PUK) and scuttling back to private business now that every scheme he has masterminded is dissolving in chaos. Montague is the banker-lawyer who helped privatise the railways under the Tories and went on to join Geoffrey Robinson's "Treasury Taskforce" which presided over multiple privatisations and PFIs. He was also special adviser to John Prescott when he was secretary of state for transport, environment and the regions.

● More PFI worries at the ministry of defence (MoD), where a £300m PFI deal with the *Eye*'s favourite computer firm EDS has been rewritten to the advantage of, er, EDS. As so often, the original deal failed to "transfer the risk" of any possible failure. So when it became clear that EDS was not going to be able to deliver the unified and computerised pay system on time, the firm promptly asked for more taxpayers' money. The government duly complied and the contract has been rewritten to let EDS off the hook. Malcolm Pledger, a deputy chief of defence staff, told *Computer Weekly* the original PFI contract "was not understood by either party". Nothing new there then.

● The latest national audit office (NAO) report on the treasury's own special PFI disaster, the NIRS2 fiasco over the computer to run national insurance data, reveals a new twist to the scams of the big companies embarking on PFI. The huge consultancy Accenture, formerly Andersen Consulting, tempted the government into breaking its own laws on competition in procurement. When Gordon Brown brought in new stakeholder pensions and new laws on pensions and benefits, the NIRS2 computer couldn't cope. What to do? If the rules protecting competition in procurement were strictly followed, the whole contract should have gone out to tender again. But no. According to the NAO report, chancellor Gordon Brown "decided that the costs of delaying the work programme and the advantages of the revised arrangements outweighed the risks associated with failng to comply with the procurement rules". So the rules were broken, and a new deal cut with Accenture, whereby the original contract (signed under the Tories) was extended and the firm handed another £144m of public money.

Worcestershire sauce

THE debate about the new PFI hospital at Worcester, and the consequent closure of all acute services at Kidderminster hospital, rumbles on in the *British Medical Journal*.

A new row was sparked by a pompous letter from Prof Brian McCloskey, director of public health for the Worcestershire health authority. The *BMJ*, he protests, should "show balance, not bias when reporting on PFI."

He did his best to challenge the vast increases in the cost of the PFI hospital at Worcester that has resulted in fewer hospital beds in the region. But the professor's intervention unleashed another storm of letters from opponents of PFI, notably from Richard Taylor MP, the retired consultant who won the Wyre Forest seat as an independent largely because so many constituents could see what was happening to their local hospitals and didn't want any more of it.

Another letter came from Dr Simon Parkinson, secretary to the Worcestershire local medical committee, who refuted McCloskey's assertions and asked for an independent review of the bed shortage — a demand the department of health has consistently rejected.

Dr Taylor may not be the only MP protesting about the shortage of hospital beds in the area. The Tory MP for Worcestershire North, Peter Luff, has written to health secretary Alan Milburn passing on news from a local GP of 21 patients awaiting admission to acute hospitals in Worcestershire — and not a bed available. Nor, he writes, are there any vacant hospital beds in Hereford, Gloucester, Selly Oak or Solihull. Luff called on Milburn to "act now before the country's health service collapses under strain".

But perhaps the cruellest blow for Mr McCloskey is the resignation of the chairman of the Worcestershire health authority, Harold Musgrove. Musgrove staunchly defended the authority's position until he could buck the figures no longer. When he finally confessed that the bed situation was as bad (or almost as bad) as the protestors claimed, he was politely asked to resign and just as politely agreed.

PS: It was Prof McCloskey who reported Dr Peter Mansfield to the general medical council for having the effrontery to offer single dose injections for vaccinations, instead of triple ones. As predicted in *Eye* 1036, which denounced the reporting of Dr Mansfield as a likely "health department-inspired witch hunt", Dr Mansfield has now been told the charges against him will not even be heard.

VIRDI'S RECKONING

A MASSIVE inquiry into the shocking and (to *Eye* readers) familiar case of police sergeant Gurpal Virdi has been going on for months under the supervision of the Metropolitan police authority (chairman Lord Harris, chair of the Greater London Authority).

The inquiry panel, set up last February, is chaired by David Muir and includes several well-known names – like that of Liberal Democrat peer Lord Dholakia and Sir Geoffrey Dear, former West Midlands chief constable. Naturally, the panel wanted to interview the man at the centre of its inquiry. So, after some generous assurances from Sue Harper, the senior policy adviser to the panel, about the Virdis' right to say what they wanted, Mr and Mrs Virdi attended the panel on 21 June.

After preliminaries, including an embarrassing moment when Sir Geoffrey Dear failed to recognise the sergeant who had taken the police oath in his presence, the panel decided to "abort" the session. The reason given was that Mr Virdi's case against his sacking by the Metropolitan police was still pending. He had won his case alleging racial discrimination against the Met, securing from a tribunal the highest ever damages for such discrimination — £150,000.

He had then sued the Met for unfair dismissal, only to be told that the police wanted to settle the case by negotiation. Assuming the matter would be settled soon, Mr Virdi accepted an offer of another job in another division of the Met, and is now being paid a full salary. He has not yet started work because the Met has persistently dragged its feet in settling his unfair sacking case. The outcome of this case is not in doubt. Mr Virdi will get another grovelling apology and another very generous payment. But the delay in bringing the case to a conclusion has meant he and his wife have not even been interviewed by the high-powered inquiry set up by the MPA to consider his case.

In a letter to Mr and Mrs Virdi on 17 September, Mr Muir told Mr Virdi that "there was nothing further to be gained by you attending the panel". His reason was still that Mr Virdi's case against the Met had not yet been finalised. Moreover, the panel had devised a new timetable, and "we may be facing the possibility that your submission cannot now be heard within the timescale".

Mr Virdi has written to Lord Harris complaining that his own submission would not be heard. "This is not natural justice," he insists. If, as seems likely, the MPA report is a whitewash, the distinguished inquiry panel will be open to the charge that it never heard the two people whose disgraceful and racist treatment by the Metropolitan police brought the inquiry into being in the first place.

PPS: Deputy assistant commissioner Suzanna Becks of the Met has written to Mr Virdi with the news that he has won an official commendation for "outstanding professionalism and dedication to duty in the manner in which you dealt with the relatives and victims of a serious assault with racial overtones on 21st March 1998 in Studland Road, Hanwell". The incident was fully reported two and half years ago in *Eye* 968.

FOLLOW-UP... FOLLOW-UP... FOLLOW-UP...

■ **WIND FARMS:** A likely explanation of the ministry of defence's mysterious objection to planning permission for a wind farm in the Kielder forest, Northumberland (*Eye* 1039), has been offered by two readers who point out that there is a bombing range at Spadeadam, a few miles west of Haltwhistle.

The aerial lead-ins to this busy facility are from both north and south, and some people in the ministry may argue that 85MW of turbine energy generated by the proposed wind farm might disturb radar or even attract misguided missiles. Whether the MoD goes so far as to allege such a proposition in public should become clear at the public inquiry, expected to be heard this month.

■ **CORRECTION:** Trials into combining a new chicken pox vaccine with the MMR jab are not taking place in the UK, as we reported last week. This error was due to a misunderstanding with the health department. The trials are taking place in Australia and Germany. Apologies to Sheffield.

LESS THAN SUPER-BUPA

WHILE one of Bupa's directors, Des Kelly, has been advising Tony Blair on care of the elderly, a Bupa care home in Kent has been at the centre of grave allegations of abuse and neglect.

Seven care workers who blew the whistle on a catalogue of cruelty, ill-treatment, doping with sedatives and the withholding of drugs and treatment at the £322-a-week Isard House in Bromley are due to be awarded compensation at an employment tribunal this week.

Except that the seven — six women and one man — are boycotting the hearing and will refuse any payment from the UK's biggest private health insurer and care provider. The reason? The careworkers say that though the tribunal found in *their favour, it so diluted or ignored* serious allegations and evidence that neither they – nor the vulnerable elderly people they sought to protect — have received justice, and they are challenging the tribunal's decision in court.

The care workers are outraged that Bupa continued to employ the woman at the centre of the abuse against the subsequent advice of social services inspectors, at one stage trying to conceal the fact from them that she was working at a different vulnerable old people's home. Bupa also promoted another, who is to face further allegations from the daughter of a resident who has recently been removed from the home.

The whistleblowers allege that Bupa has effectively been let off the hook.

They catalogued a series of abuse which went unchecked for nearly a year up to April 1999 within unit three at Isard House, which houses the most mentally and physically frail. Many suffer dementia, are unable to voice their concerns or needs and are dependent on carers for their most basic daily needs. They were hit, roughly handled, shouted and sworn at, goaded and verbally humiliated. They were left to lie or sit in their soiled clothing for up to 18 hours. One developed dreadful sores. One man, R.H., had to search for staff on other units to change his catheter bag, which was overflowing and causing him immense pain.

In one of the worst examples a woman, D.H., who had not been given laxatives, was found to have an impacted bowel. She was taken to hospital but never recovered from pneumonia. Another was so overdosed on the tranquilliser Largactil she became unconscious.

Some of the staff had been regularly reporting concerns of cruelty and neglect to senior managers at the home and had been assured matters would be dealt with. In particular they were concerned that the unit's team leader had bizarrely taken up residence in the unit, and seemed to control and encourage its punitive and cruel culture.

One of the whistleblowers, Eileen Chubb, was assured that evidence was being gathered in order to deal with this woman. When it became evident that nothing was happening and that the neglect was continuing unchecked, she and another worker, Karen Hook, went to Bromley social service inspectors.

An inquiry was launched and police were called in; but, partly because of the lapse of time and the difficulties of interviewing mentally and physically helpless old people, criminal charges were not considered. Once word spread around the home that complaints had been made and the team leader at the centre temporarily suspended, however, the whistleblowers say they were ostracised and bullied by other staff. They went off sick with stress. Shortly after they had a meeting with Mr Kelly in which they detailed their catalogue of concerns and upon which they were convinced he would act.

Er… except that at their later industrial tribunal, lawyers for Bupa maintained that not only were the whistleblowers' complaints unfounded, but they knew them to be false – ignoring the fact that they were risking their jobs when they went to social services.

Bupa maintained this defence despite a damning report into the home produced by Bromley's inspection team. After a long investigation it described how the team leader had effectively moved into the home, using it "inappropriately for her recreational purposes" and how she was "primarily responsible for allowing the climate of abuses and neglectful behaviour to exist unchecked".

Two of the Bupa whistleblowers: Karen Hook and Eileen Chubb

It also detailed a string of incidents — ranging from wiping a resident's face with a flannel with faecal material on it; inappropriate restraint of residents causing bruising; residents left in urine-soaked clothing; dosing patients with sedatives "for which there is no evidence of GP authorisation" and not giving them laxatives "with the possible outcome of distress and discomfort and indicating a disregard of residents' needs".

It concluded: "There are a significant number of witnesses amongst care staff, relatives and others who have been interviewed and who corroborate the original allegations… Inappropriate behaviour towards them did occur in the manner suggested by the witnesses who have come forward and those subsequently interviewed."

It condemned the lack of skilled staff on the unit, the long hours they worked and recommended a full investigation with appropriate disciplinary action. It is understood that because the inquiry team found that the abuse and failures were confined to unit three, and the bulk of the other residents in the home were well cared for, there was no recommendation to shut Isard House down because it would have caused too much distress to many residents who were settled and content. The aim was to clean up the act on unit three.

Bupa's Des Kelly

But at the tribunal the findings of the inspectorate were also challenged by Bupa. According to the tribunal finding, Mr Kelly had conducted disciplinary hearings against four staff named in the report — and in particular against the team leader. He found her explanations to be "entirely reasonable". According to the tribunal report, Mr Kelly decided there was nothing in her responses which he felt would constitute gross misconduct.

Despite its assertions at the tribunal, Bupa's Claire Cater told the *Eye* it accepted there were issues that were wrong on unit three and steps were taken to correct them, including the immediate suspension of the team leader. "The issue has always been to what degree," she said. "The inspection was long and drawn out and unhelpful. We did not get the witness statements for 14 months. Our own internal investigations revealed two different groups of people saying very different things. We went through everything and where we found things were far from ideal — for example with the regime for administering and recording drugs — we acted."

She said Bupa's job had also been made more difficult because of the "inconsistencies" in the statements of the whistleblowers. Some of the more serious allegations, regarding the safety of clients, had not been made in their original statement to inspectors but had come a year later. Bupa had a duty to test these inconsistencies to find out exactly what had happened, she said. The tribunal had found there had been some "exaggeration" in a few of the allegations, although it accepted they had been made in good faith.

She said the social services report indicated that the team leader should be demoted and retrained, but not dismissed. (However, a statement from Richard Turner of the inspectorate team says he contacted Mr Kelly at his home and by phone when he heard the woman was to be re-employed saying "it was unacceptable firstly because she was on bail with regard to allegations of theft and secondly that in our view she was implicated in both abuse and neglectful behaviour".)

Bupa admits that a staff member at one of the homes had panicked and tried to hide the fact that she had been re-deployed by tippexing her out of the rota. The inspectorate said: "The issue of tampering with records reflected on the fitness of senior Bupa managers and that employing her in another home for the mentally elderly infirm was a 'breach of statutory regulations'".

According to the whistleblowers, it was this woman's reinstatement which led them finally to resign. The employment tribunal rejected this claim, suggesting that a six-week delay between learning of her reemployment and quitting their jobs meant it could not be the "final straw" as they protested. However, this was one of several tribunal findings that the whistleblowers hope to challenge. They maintain the delay came because they hoped Bromley social services inspectors would intervene as they had before.

What concerned the whistleblowers most was that while the tribunal found it credible "that incontinent residents might not be changed quickly and a culture had built up of not changing residents promptly", the tribunal did not find it credible that residents would be neglected to the extent that they became "filthy and sore". Yet the whistleblowers have the care plan of one resident showing that she had a sore which went through to the bone.

In another instance the tribunal accepted that while drugs sheets revealed that medication may not have been properly administered and/or the recording was deficient, it ignored evidence suggesting records may also have been falsified. (The *Eye* has several examples of drug sheets, indicating they have been fabricated.)

The seven whistleblowers have asked the lord chancellor's department to investigate their claim that dozens of pieces of evidence presented to the tribunal — in particular the evidence of other independent witnesses — have been overlooked. They have also filed for judicial review alleging bias and misconduct on the part of the tribunal, saying they did not get a fair hearing. It could be argued that it is not the role of an industrial tribunal to uncover levels of abuse. However, once Bupa decided to brand the whistleblowers as liars, they maintain the tribunal should have evaluated all the evidence. Hence their decision not to attend and to try to block the compensation hearing. Eileen Chubb told the *Eye*: "We cannot fathom why Bupa would want to continue to employ abusers. We went to court firstly for a declaration of the truth of what was going on in that home — and secondly for compensation. We will not accept compensation if the price to be paid is the truth."

As a result of events in Isard House, she and Karen Hook have now set up the non-profit making Compassion in Care, which will publish a handbook for families on what to look for in a care home and how to keep elderly relatives safe. They fund it by working as office cleaners at night. But some good may yet come of the tribunal hearing. As a result of its scrutiny of drug and medical records, Kent police have been reexamining the drug sheets and it is understood a file has been sent to the DPP.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

WHAT may finally – famous last words – be the end game for the seemingly endless Guinness saga could well be reached next week. If, that is, an anticipated influential ruling by the House of Lords in another case is delivered this week and if the court of appeal decides there is sufficient time for the ruling's implications for the Guinness case to be considered.

The law lords' verdict in the Kansal case is likely to be far more influential in deciding this third appeal by Ernest Saunders and friends than the murky and mysterious matter of the allegedly "bent" juror in the 1990 trial first disclosed in *Eye* 1030.

Yash Pal Kansal had his 1992 conviction for offences under the insolvency act quashed by the court of appeal in June because evidence he had been forced to give in his bankruptcy proceedings had been used against him at his trial. The appeal court held that this was a breach of the human rights convention ban on compelled self-incrimination.

The Kansal case had been referred back to the appeal court by the criminal cases review commission following the coming into force of the human rights act last year and the 1996 ruling by the European court of human rights against the use of transcripts of the evidence given by Saunders to inspectors from the Department of Timidity & Inaction during the Guinness trial. The right of silence was denied before DTI inspectors and bankruptcy examiners.

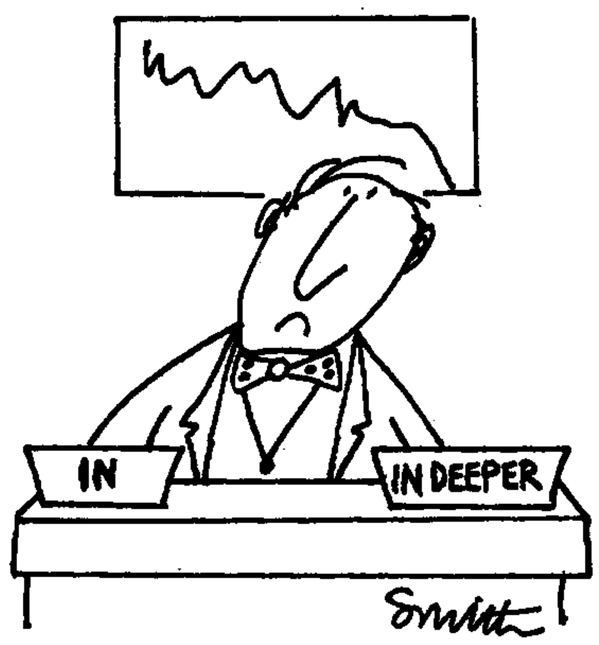
The DTI transcripts were used at the Guinness trial against not just Saunders but also his three share supporting co-defendants, Gerald Ronson, Jack Lyons and Anthony Parnes. The latest Guinness appeal arises from a reference back to the appeal court by the CCRC of the Ronson/Lyons/ Parnes convictions on this human rights point. "Alzheimer" Saunders has joined their appeal. The appeal is opposed by the Serious Farce Office, for which Guinness remains its biggest ever success, on the grounds that the CCRC should not be able to apply new law retrospectively to old cases.

Kansal is significant because that is exactly what the appeal court did though with a marked lack of enthusiasm because of the previous judicial policy of refusing appeals based on a change in the law. But the judges in Kansal held that there was no time limit to verdicts that could be referred back on appeal by the CCRC and that if those cases involved a breach of the European convention on human rights against self-incrimination then the verdicts must be quashed.

Because of the threat from an "alarming" tidal wave of appeals the appeal court called for a clear ruling on the retrospective nature of the CCRC applying the human rights act asap. Result: the Kansal hearing in the House of Lords.

So far so good for the Guinness Four. But the situation is confused by the fact that a few weeks after the Kansal ruling by the court of appeal, the law lords did give a ruling about the retrospective nature of the human rights act. In the Lambert case the law lords held 4-1 that it was not fully retrospective. That was seen as a victory for the SFO.

But that ruling could now be changed when the Kansal decision, where the circumstances are much closer to Guinness than in Lambert, is handed down. Certainly the law lords were acutely aware of its significance to the Guinness appeal. In an unusual move they agreed to hear counsel for the Guinness defendants during the Kansal appeal.



Lawyers with knowledge of the Guinness case believe that if the law lords uphold the Kansal decision that the CCRC can apply the human rights act to old cases, then a judgment in favour of the Guinness Four may be inevitable. The only issue then would be whether there was sufficient other evidence beyond the transcripts on which the jury could have convicted – the view taken by the appeal court in 1995 – to uphold the convictions.

If the Kansal ruling is over-turned then the appeal court may be as reluctant this time as it has been on two previous occasions to acquit greedy or ambitious men who, whatever the legal technicalities, are seen by the City to have been guilty of a secret, illegal and improper share ramping operation for which they were overly rewarded.

Absent a favourable ruling in Kansal, the Guinness appeal is likely to centre on the failure of Scotland Yard to inform the Guinness trial judge of an allegation that the jury foreman was open to receiving money in return for a "not guilty" verdict.

An investigation by Merseyside police has been unable to reconcile the recollections of a police informer and two junior detectives with those of several senior Yard officers. Not surprising as the versions of what happened in May 1990, half way through the Guinness trial, are mutually exclusive.

Colin Perry, then a detective constable at the fraud squad, was told that the juror was open to "large money offers" by the informant who had received this tip from a criminal associate, Paul Maguire, who knew the jury foreman, a publican. The two men were said to drink together in north London. Perry shared this information with Craig Allam, a DC on the drugs squad who also "ran" the informant. Allam recorded the information on three intelligence reports passed on to his drugs squad superiors two of whom initialled the reports as having been seen and read.

The reports record that Perry had also informed the officer in charge of the Guinness case, Det chief superintendent Richard Botwright, and the acting head of the fraud squad, det chief supt Tony McStravick, who was said to have informed Commander Roy Penrose, head of the squad that provided jury protection. Perry told Merseyside officers – who describe his account as "credible" – that he also discussed the subject with Botwright on two other occasions, once with two other senior fraud squad officers.

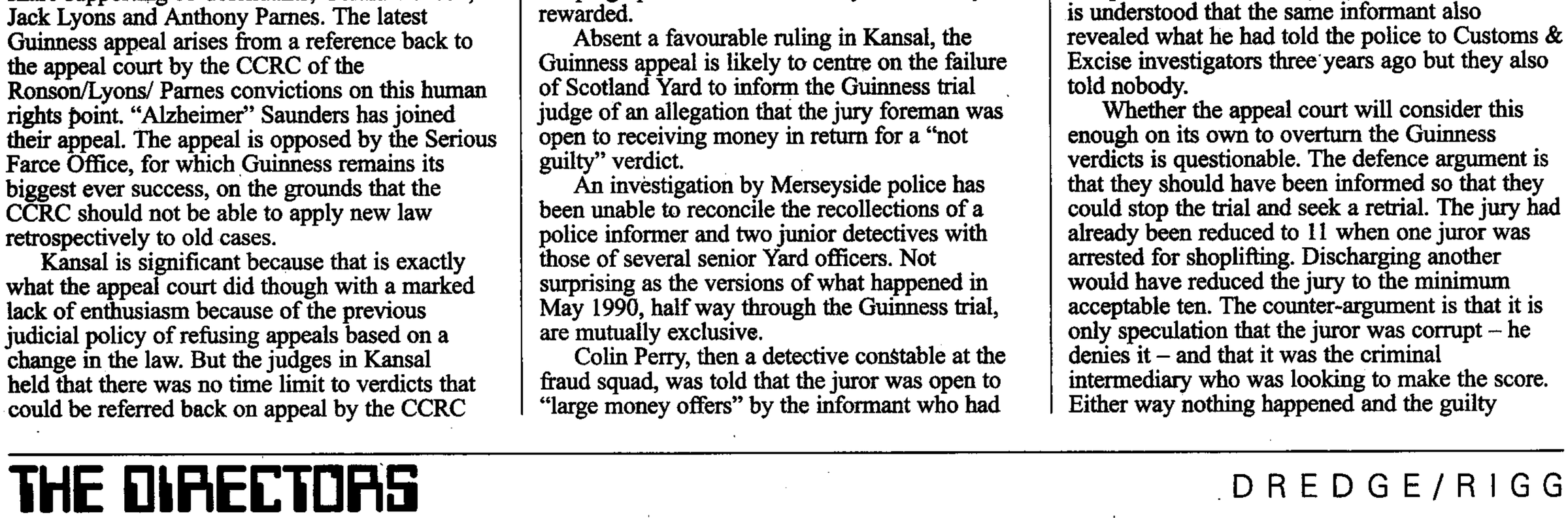
But remarkably all the fraud squad and drugs squad officers either cannot remember anything about the allegation of possible jury "nobbling" or dispute what Perry, Allam and the informant say. Less surprising perhaps is that the jury foreman and the intermediary also deny any discussion about being prepared to sell a "not guilty" vote or influence other members of the jury to vote the same way. The foreman also denies knowing the intermediary Maguire.

The appeal court could well see the informant, codenamed Ridgely, and all the police officers called to testify. The informant has already testified for the prosecution in a number of major drugs and money laundering trials so it will be difficult for the SFO to attack his credibility. However, the judges may decide on the conflicting police evidence that it is not possible after 11 years to decide who is telling the truth.

However, certain facts are unquestionable. No word of the allegation about the juror was passed to the trial judge as required. There is no record that the matter was investigated as would be expected. Senior Scotland Yard officers knew of a serious allegation – confirmed by Allam's reports – which could have jeopardised the Guinness trial but told neither the SFO or lawyers involved in the case.

That was a serious failure by the police irrespective of what Perry says he did. Ironically it is understood that the same informant also revealed what he had told the police to Customs & Excise investigators three years ago but they also told nobody.

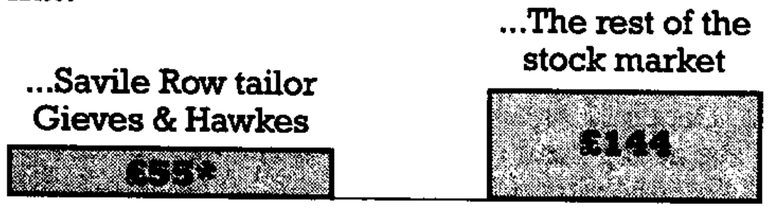
Whether the appeal court will consider this enough on its own to overturn the Guinness verdicts is questionable. The defence argument is that they should have been informed so that they could stop the trial and seek a retrial. The jury had already been reduced to 11 when one juror was arrested for shoplifting. Discharging another would have reduced the jury to the minimum acceptable ten. The counter-argument is that it is only speculation that the juror was corrupt – he denies it – and that it was the criminal intermediary who was looking to make the score. Either way nothing happened and the guilty


THE DIRECTORS
DREDGE/RIGG
IN A MERITOCRACY THE MONEY GOES TO THOSE WITH THE GREATEST MERIT...
... BUT HOW CAN YOU POSSIBLY SAY WHO HAS THE GREATEST MERIT ?
IT'S EASY— THEY HAVE THE MOST MONEY !

Stock Horror

I say, Gieves!

Value today of £100 invested 5 years ago in...



**This wouldn't buy the trouser leg of one of their £2,000 suits*

verdicts were unanimous.

The appeal court's latest decision in the 15-year Guinness scandal will decide a game being played for big stakes – much bigger than any of those involving real miscarriages of justice. If the convictions of Ronson and Lyons are quashed they will immediately be entitled to reclaim the fines of £5m and £3m exacted in 1990 together with costs orders of £440,000 each plus interest together with further millions in defence costs. Parnes too paid costs of £440,000. That bill alone would probably exceed £20m. There is also the little matter of returning Lyons' knighthood.

The question of compensation for all four defendants (all but Lyons were jailed) may be less clear cut. The European court in its most recent ruling stated on the issue of damages that it could not speculate on whether the outcome of the 1990 trial would have been any different if the DTI transcripts had not been used. The European court also said "no causal connection has been established" between any loss that might be claimed and the breach of their human rights.

The appeal court is expected to be equally unenthusiastic about the prospect of multi-million compensation or damages to Ernest Saunders as well as to the other three defendants on the basis that what they did was illegal and involved a cover-up including false invoices from Ronson and Lyons. Saunders in particular is unlikely to merit much sympathy having committed perjury regularly during the trial and then to have fooled the appeal court into reducing his sentence by feigning Alzheimer's disease.

One possibility might be to review each verdict separately. In that case Parnes could well be acquitted on the basis that the transcripts of his DTI evidence were crucial to the case against him but less so with the other three. Another option would be a decision to quash the verdicts while making clear that the defendants were not innocent thereby limiting the chances of compensation.

The greatest irony would be if the Guinness defendants were all cleared on a technicality having been found guilty not just by a jury but also by City opinion and finally years later by the very DTI inspectors whose investigation enabled them to be "cleared".

'Slicker'

JUST FANCY THAT!

TIMES are tough for Lord Simpson of Dunkeld, sacked as chief executive of Marconi in September after the company made six-monthly losses of £5.1bn and accrued debts of £3.4bn.

Though his stewardship was catastrophic for the telecom giant – thousands were made redundant and the share price collapsed – to the disgust of workers and shareholders he left with a pay-off totalling £2.8m. But they may allow themselves a small snigger to learn that Simpson is now reduced to doing comedy turns on the after-dinner speaking circuit.

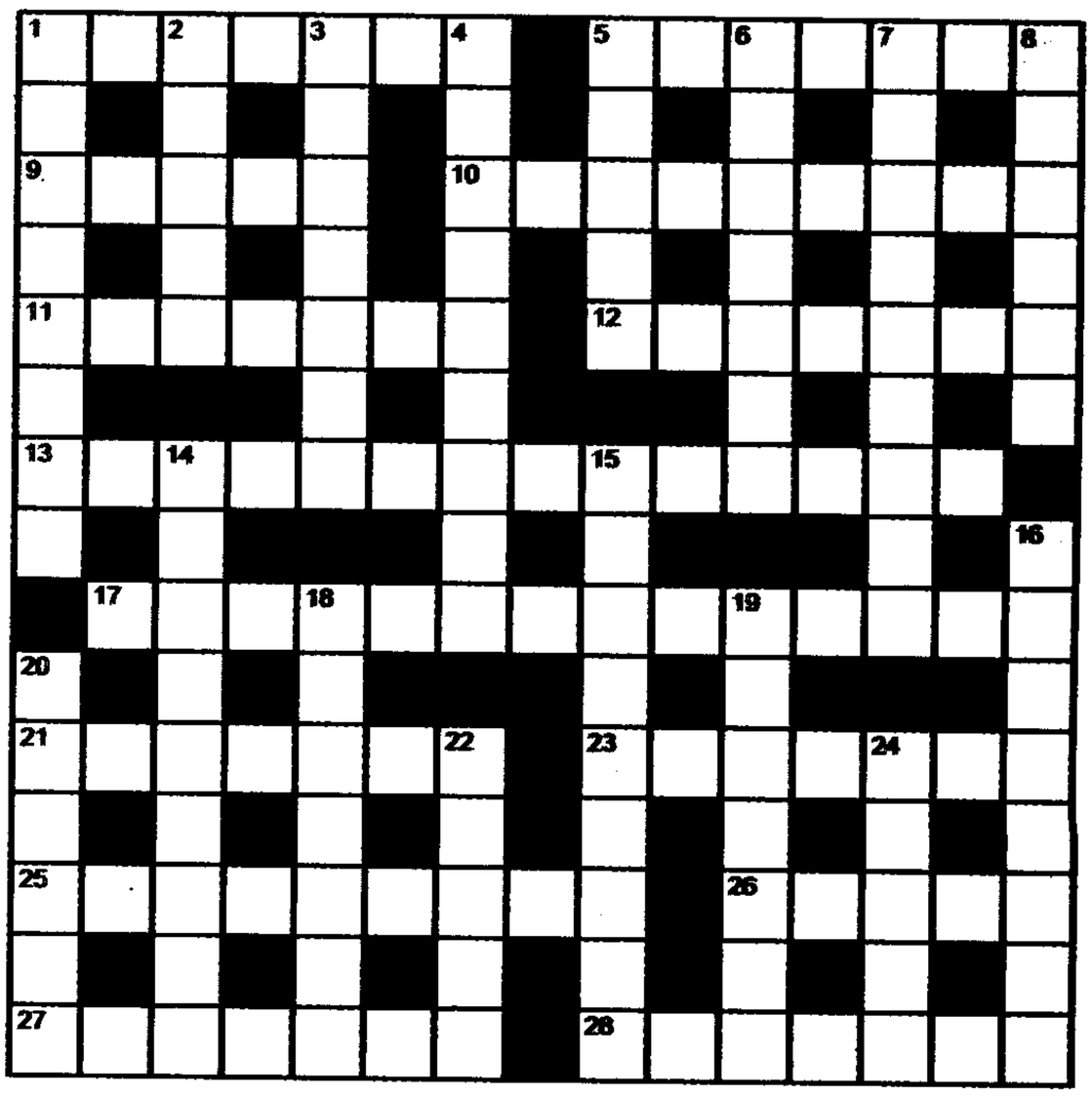
The title of his talk to the Reform Club's economics and current affairs group in the new year? "Creating wealth and employment — the importance of a strong UK industrial base." Should have them rolling in the aisles...

EYE CROSSWORD 197

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 7 December 2001.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1 Bush and Blair – leaders without balls to take on task of operation at the front (4,3)

5 Footballers getting sod all in exchange for a set of balls (7)

9 Second mate's crack (5)

10 Continued getting screwed but made out not at all (9)

11 Tender? Just look likely to come (3,4)

12 Tears from Smith's chief whips ... (7)

13 ... "Parliamentary delaying tactic is frustrating shit" (8,6)

17/24 Just like yours truly to pant and get windy, cock (3-4,7,5)

21 Stroke emergent pubic hair in body search (3-4)

23 Dance and drink disaster (5-2)

25 Lives with Bob wearing wretched sack (9)

26 Arse gets nothing from one-time defence organisation (5)

27 Tony extremely protective of American-Canadian holiday region (7)

28 Have a feeling about endless pussy, etc. (7)

DOWN

1 "Beastly little climber" an over-familiar way to address the President? (4,4)

2 Try getting an erection to set an example and get gawped at (5)

3 Mount bird on promenade and risk getting hit (7)

4 More pornographic measurements taken by English well-groomed older woman (4-5)

5 John comes by holding middle of penis (5)

6 Chuck to expose gay actors? (7)

7 Old South Americans have a real laugh working together (2,7)

8 One who'd love to make you smart (6)

14 They offer a means of getting around rude 'bum noises' (9)

15 Mr Jones, up at hospital, testicles in a state of disuse ... (9)

16 ... grasping a soft crumpled scrotum, emasculated, loses nerve (5,3)

18 Model in symphony of sexy material (7)

19 Russian districts getting last of loo pans (7)

20 Direct crappy item at start or end of the film? (6)

22 Filthy no good bloke's inside (5)

24 See 17 Across

Crossword 196 winner CAROL TOMSON

Solution to Crossword 196

ACROSS: 1/9 A kick up the backside 6 Shag 10 Mascara 11 Bran tub 12 Nudes 13 Break a leg 14 Majesty 16 Stimuli 18 No balls 20 Fleabag 21 Funny ha-ha 23 Venus 25 Ermined 26 Necking 27 Dude 28 Jolly Roger.

DOWN: 1 Admen 2 Inside job 3 Keats 4 Playboy 5 Hebrews 7 Hotel 8 Go begging 14 Minefield 15 Splaying 17 Unbending 19 So-and-so 20 Flannel 22 Nomad 23 Vicar 24 Sugar.

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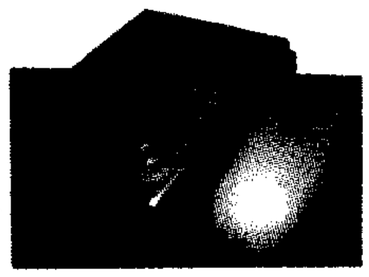

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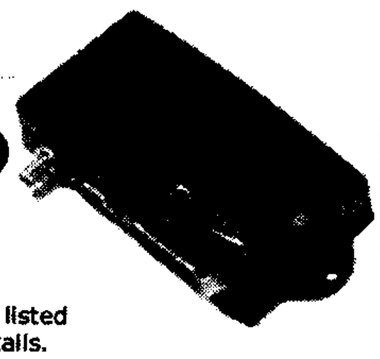

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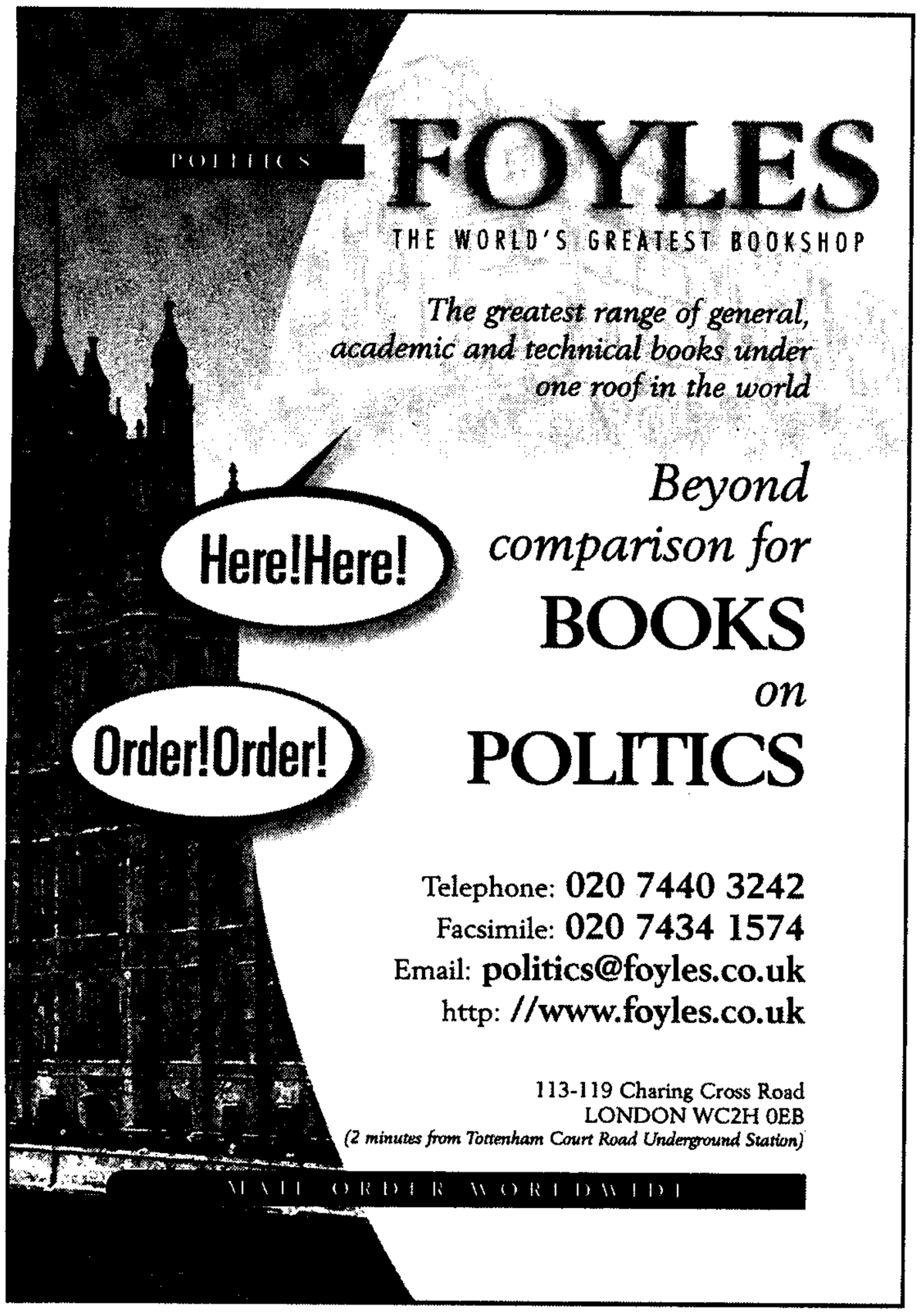

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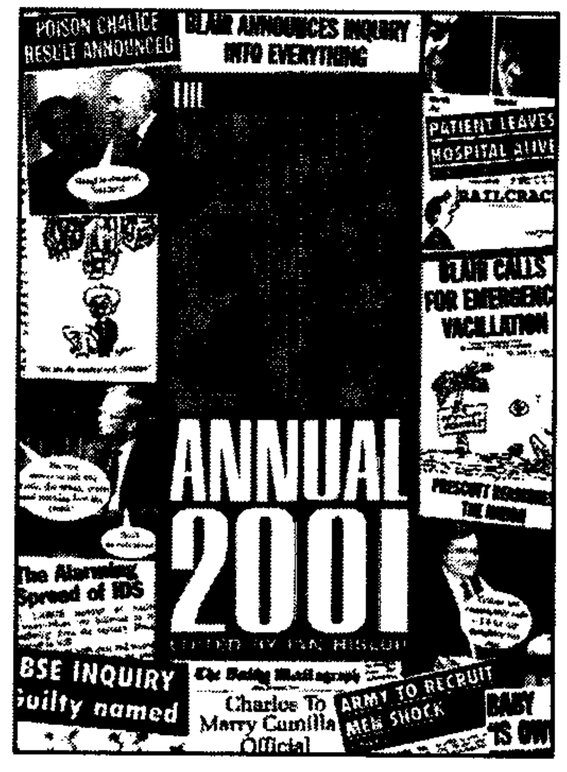

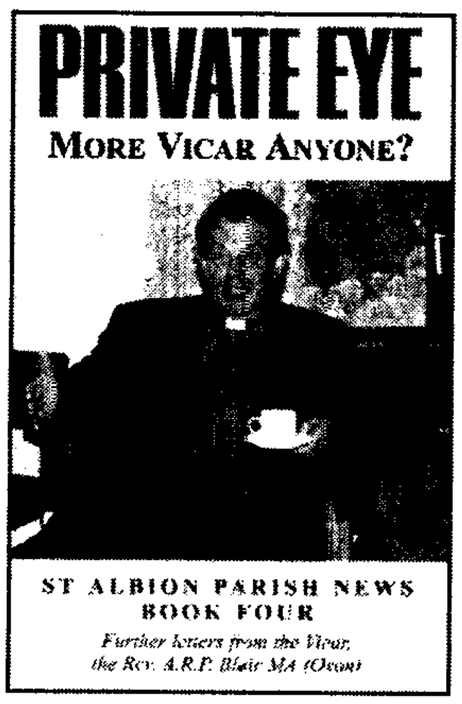

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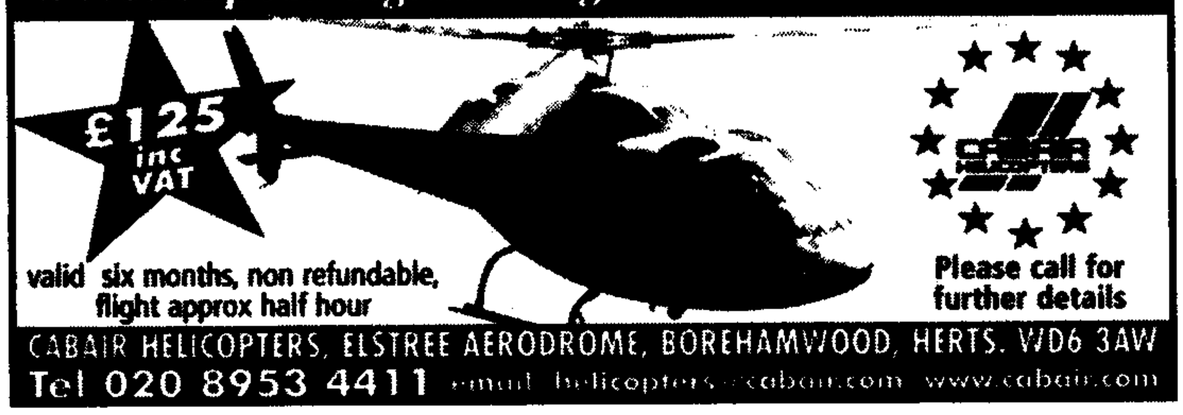

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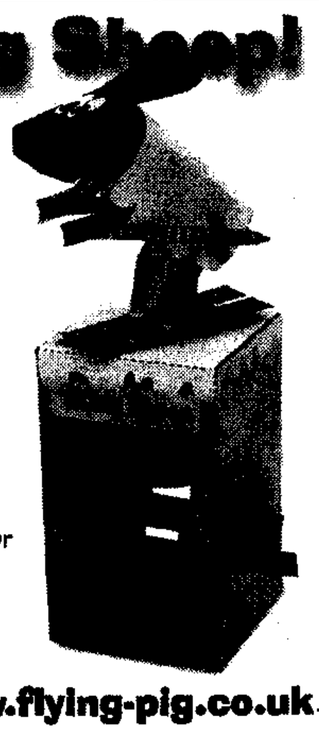

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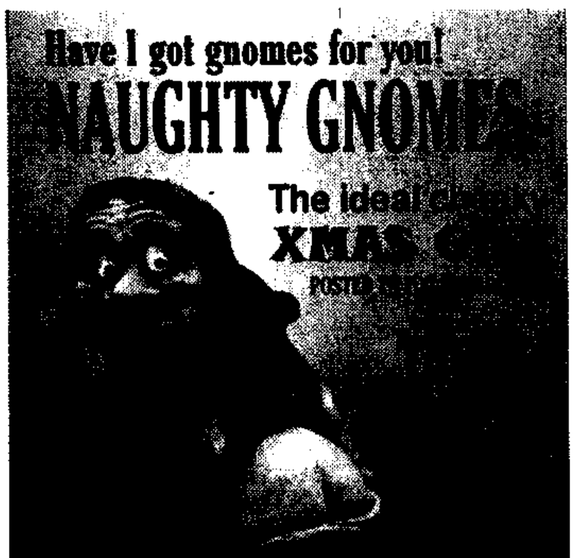

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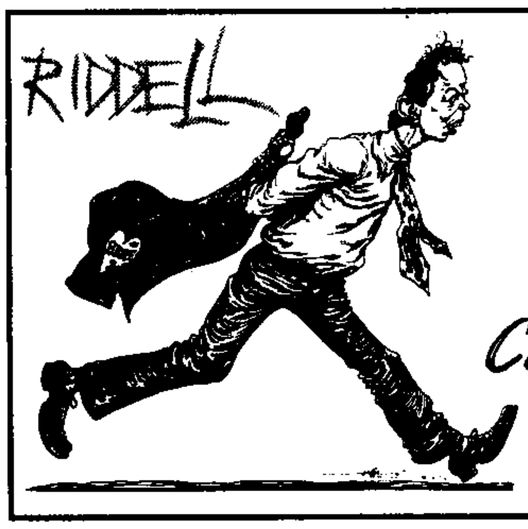

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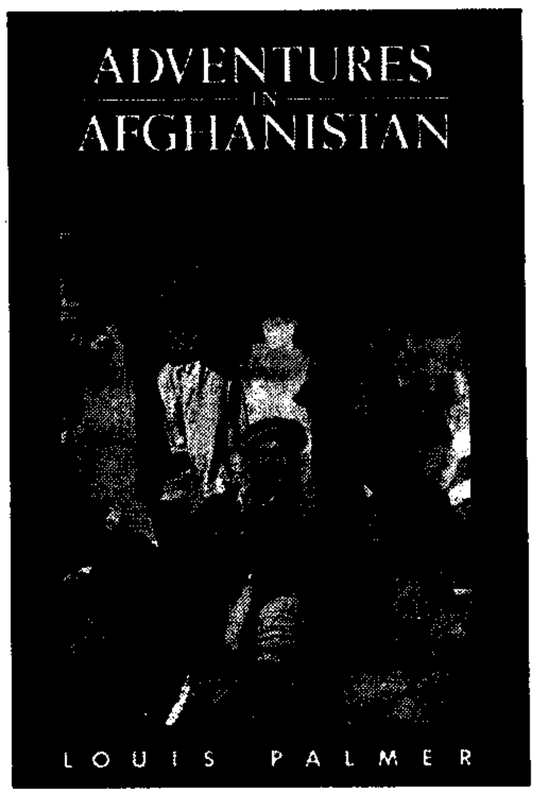

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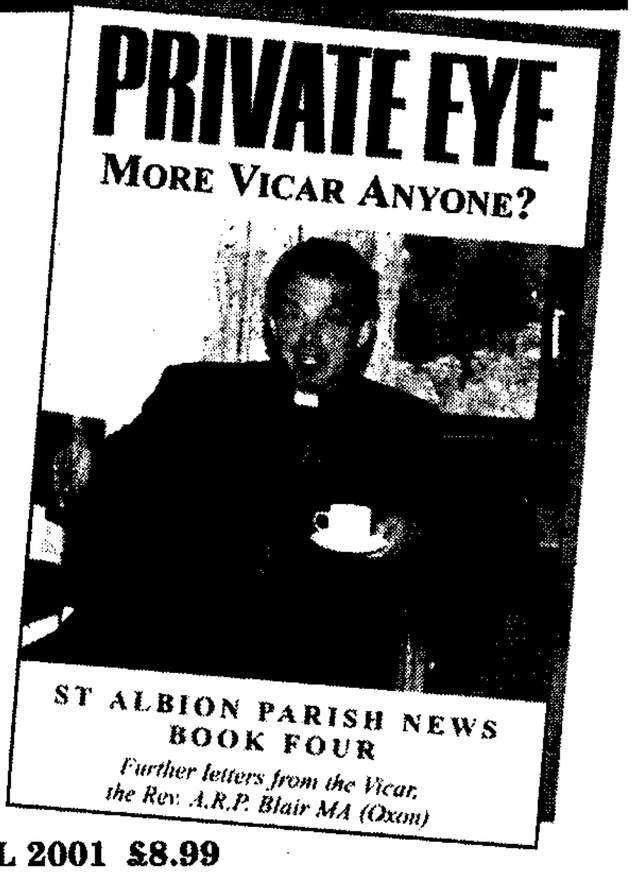

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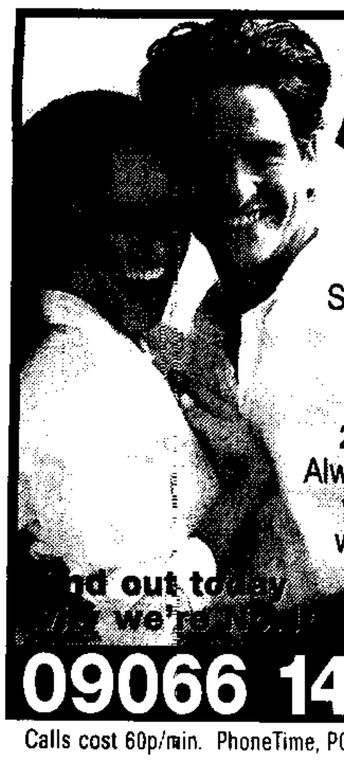

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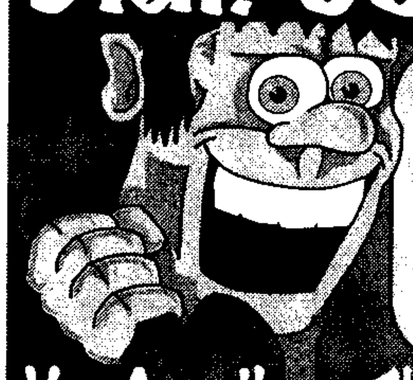

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HORNITHOLOGIST... (genuine mellow male) seeks rare bird for sensuality!!! She's friendly, sexy, petite (bi-sexual?). Not extinct?? Please contact... keithsco@hotmail.com

SHY SINGLE MALE, late 30s, looks younger, desperately needs a good (or even, not so good) woman. London. Box 0242.

GENEROUS, HAPPY, LITERATE, professional male, 30s, WLTM female, 20-35, slim, athletic and arty. Email: george6462001@yahoo.co.uk

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PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE – male very good looking, witty, funny, frank, sharp highly sexual – seeks feminine female – 07949 453587.

LONDON LAWYER (50) seeks libidinous lady for fun in an uncomplicated relationship. Box 0141

AMIABLE MALE – youthful 60, occasionally assertive, wide interests, sporadic attempts at wit and culture, – WLTM pleasant unassertive female. Photo and phone appreciated. London/Kent. Box 0941.

TALL, ATTRACTIVE 30s FEMALE professional. SOH intact seeks similar male who has not yet disappeared up his own etc. NW. Box 0341

ATTRACTIVE 'BOOKISH' MALE, 27, Honest & Romantic. Seeking similar Female 26-33 Yrs for love/relationship. Box 0742.

WARM SENSITIVE ARTICULATE MAN, young sixties, open marriage, enjoys arts, conversation, good food/wine, seeks sensual woman friend/lover for special relationship. South London. Box 0541.

FIT, TALL, SEXY, 35, married, cultured, deep thinker, WLTM serious woman, knows what she wants, for fluff or powder puff look elsewhere. Physical partner, different conversation, different under covers. I won't disappoint! Hexagonboy@aol.com

NAUGHTY BOY, 50, seeks naughty girl for the occasional afternoons detention! berkshireboy50@hotmail.com

STOCKING SEASON. Good looking guy, 28, attached, but off leash in November seeks pretty woman 18-45 for discreet fun – feeling_randy@hotmail.com

TALL CUDDLY BLUE-EYED married man seeks straightforward lady for laughs and afternoon delight – cheeky_ize@hotmail.com

MALE, 39, UNATTACHED, caring, attentive, genuine, easy-going, sincere, discreet, varied interests seeks mature female. E-mail: London.friendship@ukgateway.net

BORED BUSINESSMAN, 44, 6FT TALL, BROWN HAIR/EYES, SUCCESSFUL, WITTY, INTELLIGENT – looking for very beautiful, adventurous young lady to spoil and pamper rotten. Let's enjoy the nicer things in life, here and abroad. Poss suit student/nurse type. E-mail: ROMOLA@LINEONE.NET

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MALE SEEKS FEMALE, aged 40-50, looks immaterial, leading to a relationship. Box 0842.

FEMALE, occasionally irritating would like to meet slightly dysfunctional male for arguments and palavers. Box 1242.

PINK EYE

TALL, SLIGHTLY CONFUSED, straight-acting male, 28. Done the scene now looking for 1-2-1. Home Counties. Box 1942.

CUTE GAY GUY looking for holiday companion. Box 1542.

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EYE NEED

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HELP ME HELP. Need £2000 to join Christian hospital ship taking medical aid to 3rd world. Donations greatly appreciated. Lloyds 77-09-12 26244568

FUTURE JOURNALIST requesting financial help during training. Can you help? RBofScotland 16-00-53, 10041248

HIT ROCK BOTTOM – desperate single mum needs decent life for son. Any donations. Thank you kindly. HSBC 40 26 12, Sort Code 61613103.

URGENTLY NEEDING FINANCIAL HELP. No job and outstanding debts of £8,000. Any assistance appreciated. Thankyou. Natwest 55-81-56, 07221118.

IN DEBT £2000 – any donation gratefully received. HALIFAX 11-08-50 Account Number 00306708 – Please help. thank you.

MOTHER DROWNING in mounting debts needs help – HSBC Code: 40-04-10 Account: 91373528

FUNDING NEEDED FOR BAR IN SPAIN. Can repay. 01842 811012.

DESPERATELY NEED HELP. About to lose family home due to cheating business partner. Need £19,680. Woolwich sort: 10-80-02, Account: 70917461.

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DEPT 15K AND MOUNTING. Working hard but help appreciated. 07-01-16, 32465793.

IN DEBT NURSE retraining to coach golf. Donations, free loan? Free lessons in return. A&L 35521738, 72-50-00.

CHRONICALLY ILL SINCE 11, need money to help with recovery and study medicine, any amount welcome, HSBC 40-47-75, 62077620. Thanks.

SINGLE FATHER, struggling with bills and work after wife left me with three young children. Only 24 hours in the day and not enough money to continue. Please help! Any small contribution greatly appreciated. LLOYDS/TSB 30-00-09 00003993.

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FEMALE GRADUATE planning round-the-world trip. 12k debts. Please help. Natwest 010135 30448387

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PLEASE HELP ME be rid of my old life completely. Hard working carer needs £4,000 to pay credit cards. Thank you. Mat. 7.7. Halifax 11-00-93, 00444175.

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You choose the sort of people you want to meet yourself! After completing a comprehensive questionnaire your information is carefully compiled and the matching process, in which your data is compared with that of every other member begins. The most compatible matches will be found and their details forwarded to you immediately. Your details can likewise show up on matches from other members and they will contact you, and so a whole new social life begins.

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A few documented Dateline experiences.

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G.C. Suffolk

What sort of people join Dateline?

■ **Brian** *is a 53 year old Air Traffic Controller from Dorset. He enjoys dinner parties and the theatre. Brian describes himself as averagely built and attractive.*

■ **Anna** *is a 32 year old Medical Secretary from Reading. A slim and attractive non-smoker who enjoys socialising. She likes to listen to classical and operatic music.*

■ **Malcolm** *is a 44 year old Software Engineer from South London. He describes himself as slim and attractive. He is a non-smoker and enjoys classical music.*

■ **Karen**, *47, lives in Chichester and likes eating out and spending time with friends. She also enjoys jazz music and the countryside.*

The answer seems to be – people like you!

* Names have been changed for reasons of privacy.
Membership restricted to ages 18+ only

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Your Details

Mr ❒ Mrs ❒ Ms ❒

Surname:

First Name:

Address:

Post Code:

Tel No:

E-mail:

Marital Status:

❒ Single ❒ Divorced
❒ Widowed ❒ Separated

Age: Height:

Occupation

Religion:

Build: Attractiveness:

❒ Slight ❒ V. Attractive
❒ Medium ❒ Attractive
❒ Large ❒ Average

Your Personality

tick which traits closely describe you

❒ Affectionate ❒ Fashionable
❒ Serious ❒ Practical
❒ Considerate ❒ Conventional
❒ Shy ❒ Reliable
❒ Romantic ❒ Adventurous

Your interests

Please tick for a liking, cross for a dislike or leave blank for no pref.

❒ Wining/Dining ❒ Jazz/Folk music
❒ Pubs ❒ Classical music
❒ Sports/Keep fit ❒ Theatre/Arts
❒ Politics/History ❒ Watching TV
❒ Reading ❒ Smoking
❒ Travelling ❒ Mixing with friends
❒ Science/Tech ❒ Children
❒ Cinema ❒ Homemaking
❒ Pets/Animals ❒ Gardening
❒ Pop music ❒ Countryside

Your Attitudes

tick for yes, cross for no or leave blank if you don't feel strongly

❒ I prefer town life
❒ I involve myself in community activities
❒ I have many friends of my own sex
❒ I am interested in current affairs
❒ I am looking for one special relationship
❒ I like team activities
❒ My work makes it difficult to meet new people
❒ I want to extend my social life as well as finding a special relationship

Your Ideal Partner

Min. age: Max. age:

Height: min. max.

❒ Don't mind

Marital Status:

❒ Single ❒ Divorced
❒ Widowed ❒ Separated
❒ Don't mind

Build: Attractiveness:

❒ Slight ❒ V. Attractive
❒ Medium ❒ Attractive
❒ Large ❒ Average

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Send in your completed detail
(19p 2nd class, 27p 1st class) abo

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St Peter Port
Guernsey GY1 1Z
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